DOCTORAL THESIS

Encountering Shakespeare elsewhere

digital distribution, audience reception, and the changing value of Shakespeare in performance.

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Award date:
2020

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

Encountering Shakespeare Elsewhere:

Digital Distribution, Audience Reception, and the Changing Value of Shakespeare in Performance

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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2019

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference DTP 17/026 in the Department of Drama, Theatre & Performance, and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 13.06.17.

Abstract

Since the launch of National Theatre Live in 2009, digital distribution has made it possible for audiences to access theatre productions across a range of reception sites. Developing the critical conversation around theatre broadcasting, this thesis examines the reception of digitally distributed theatrical productions of Shakespeare at three sites of encounter: the cinema, the school, and online. Considering evidence gathered via audience research alongside critical scholarship from across academic disciplines, it provides new insight into where, how, and why twenty-first century audiences are experiencing, engaging with, and valuing Shakespeare in performance beyond the theatre auditorium. Chapter 1 draws on audience surveys undertaken at screenings of NT Live's *Macbeth* (2018) at two different UK screening venues to explore how different venues determine the reception of cinema broadcasts. Chapter 2 examines the school as a site for encountering Shakespeare performance, basing its analysis on observations of two RSC Schools' Broadcasts at two UK schools. Using the results of an online survey and interviews, Chapter 3 focuses on the reception of online broadcasts, considering how the fragmentation of reception across space and time influences the ways in which audiences participate with, and value, Shakespeare in performance.

The way in which audiences experienced agency, hybridity, community and presence, as well as how they valued their encounters and Shakespeare, are explored as recurring themes across the thesis. I argue that experiences with digitally distributed theatre are multiple and diverse and are actively negotiated by audiences in relation to their specific contexts of reception. As well as

illuminating how and why audiences participate in broadcasts, I argue that such experiences should be considered as encounters with theatre and suggest that broadcasts offer an opportunity to fundamentally reconsider what might ‘count’ as a theatrical encounter in the twenty-first century.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the University of Roehampton, who generously funded this PhD through a Vice-Chancellor's scholarship.

I am enormously grateful to my supervisors Susanne Greenhalgh and Fiona Wilkie for their continual support and invaluable guidance. Thank you both for trusting in my research process, and for your encouragement, enthusiasm, and reassurance throughout. Your advice, academic rigor, and insight have not only benefitted this project, but have made my PhD experience a particularly enjoyable and rewarding one.

I would also like to thank my research participants, whose experiences form the backbone of this project. Especial thanks to the Rio Cinema and Farnham Maltings for allowing me to undertake research at their screenings, and to the teachers and students at Sir Harry Smith Community College and Kensington Aldridge Academy for allowing me to observe their Schools' Broadcasts. Thanks are also due to everyone who either shared or answered my online questionnaire, and especially to my online interviewees, who so graciously gave their time to answer my questions in such detailed and interesting ways.

The support of colleagues across academic disciplines has been instrumental to the development of this project. In particular, I would like to thank the participants of the 'Recreating Shakespearean Performance Cultures Worldwide' seminar at the World Shakespeare Congress 2016, who provided encouragement and feedback on this work in its very early stages, and to the convenors of that seminar, Pascale Aebischer, Susanne Greenhalgh, and Laurie E. Osborne for working hard to publish

an edited collection based on the seminar which has become instrumental to this project. Thanks are also due to the attendees of the 2017 ‘Shakespeare, Media, Technology and Performance’ symposium at the University of Exeter, many of whom participated in a pilot of the online questionnaire.

I am lucky to have been surrounded by an inspiring and supportive community of colleagues and peers, of whom there are too many to mention here, throughout this process. I am particularly indebted to Kirsty Sedgman, whose tireless advocacy for theatre audience research has paved the way for this project. I am grateful to the various members of the STR New Researcher’s Network committee for their support, especially that of my co-chair Ella Hawkins. Sarah Blissett, Tara Fatehi Irani, Robin Craig and Lauren Cantos have shared the PhD journey with me – you are all absolutely excellent.

I am greatly indebted to Pascale Aebischer, for suggesting that I might be capable of PhD-level study in the first place, and for her ongoing mentorship and encouragement. This thesis is a testament, not only to the influence of her academic work, but to her incredible generosity and her ongoing commitment to supporting early career researchers.

My friends and family deserve huge thanks for their unwavering support, even when they weren’t sure exactly what I was doing or why it was taking so long. Thanks to my parents, CB and Frad, for everything you have done, and to my nieces Ottilie and Billie, born in the middle of this project, for being such great distractions. Thanks also to all of TS for being the best group of friends I could ask for. Finally, I would like to thank my partner Olly for his endless patience, proofreading skills, steadfast belief in me, and for making the past three years an absolute joy.

I would not have been able to undertake postgraduate study in London if my grandparents, Angela and Jim Chester, had not let me live in their attic during my masters, and then, let me stay for another year and a half. This thesis owes its existence to their generosity, their love, and their endless supply of Diet Coke. It is dedicated to them both.

Introduction - Encountering Shakespeare in Performance

In the summer of 2011, just before I started university, I experienced my first National Theatre production. The National's production of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* was not my first experience of professional theatre; I had seen a few live productions in cities close to where I lived, travelling to Cambridge, and sometimes to London, with family members to see a variety of shows including a few Shakespeare plays. This time, however, a trip to the South Bank was unnecessary. *The Cherry Orchard* was being broadcast live to cinemas as part of the second season of NT Live, the National Theatre's new broadcast programme, and I only had to drive ten minutes to the closest multiplex cinema to see it.

Since that first cinema broadcast, my experiences with theatre have continued to be shaped by theatre broadcasting. In particular, cinema broadcasts and online streams have meant that I have seen many more productions of Shakespeare than I would have otherwise been able to afford, or would have even considered seeing. Indeed, Shakespeare productions have made up a significant majority of those that I have seen through digital distribution. The abundance of Shakespeare in my own theatre broadcast experiences reflects (and has fuelled) my own personal interest in Shakespeare in performance, but is also reflective of the wider part that Shakespeare's work has played in the development of digital distribution practices. Pascale Aebischer and Susanne Greenhalgh point out in their introduction to *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience* – the first major edited collection on Shakespeare and theatre broadcasting – that the event cinema industry is 'inextricably connected to Shakespeare', acting as 'the main provider of content, a

significant shaping influence regarding form and paratextual framing, and a focal point for global fan communities' (2018: 2).[1]

For content providers such as NT Live, broadcasting of their Shakespeare productions represents a safe bet. Shakespeare is familiar to, and popular with, audiences in many countries and screenings of the plays ensure high returns at the box office, with Shakespeare's association with high cultural value working to legitimise a new media form. As Susan Bennett puts it, in the complex marketplace of theatre broadcasting, Shakespeare 'participates as a valuable instrument, a labourer on behalf of the Event Cinema brand', contributing to the economic success of an industry that she notes was forecast to reach a value of $1 billion worldwide by 2019 (2018: 42). The significant role that Shakespeare has played, and continues to play, in the theatre broadcasting industry has meant that I (and other audience members) have benefitted from increased and more convenient access to Shakespeare performances from (mostly UK-based) major producing companies such as the National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe and the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as to productions from smaller, and more experimental, companies including Cheek by Jowl and Forced Entertainment.

As well as altering *how much* Shakespeare I have been able to access, digital distribution has also had an important impact on *where,* and therefore *how*, I have watched those productions. As well as watching in theatres, I have seen contemporary Shakespeare performance in a range of local cinemas and screening

[1] 'Event cinema' is a term used to refer to the screening of theatre, concerts and other events to cinemas. It is used mostly by the cinema industry to differentiate between this type of content and regular film screenings, and is sometimes also described as 'alternative content' or 'screen arts'.

venues, sometimes watching live, and sometimes with a delay or as an 'encore' screening. These screenings enabled new ways of participating with theatre; I have shared interval thoughts via Facebook Messenger with a friend watching a live cinema broadcast in a different city, and listened to an audio commentary via headphones during an 'encore' cinema screening of NT Live's *Coriolanus* (2014). Online streams of Shakespeare have also enabled the cultivation of whole new ways of watching and engaging with theatre productions. I have watched Shakespeare at home whilst cooking dinner, have paused and fast-forwarded my way through productions, and have watched on my phone, laptop, and TV. I have watched some of these online Shakespeares in one go, have watched others in parts over a number of days, and have caught only moments or glimpses of some productions. Watching online has also enabled new forms of communication with other audience members, and I have often watched online productions with one eye on my phone or on a separate tab on my computer screen to gauge audience reaction via social media as it unfolds.

As well as creating new ways of experiencing current or very recent productions, digital distribution has also created new ways of seeing past productions; broadcasts blur the line between performance and archive, and I have also experienced broadcasts as recordings and archived documents, studying them in the National Theatre archives, watching RSC broadcasts on DVD, and accessing recordings online via educational platforms such as Digital Theatre+ as well as via some less-legitimate sources.[2]

[2] A number of cinema broadcast recordings are available (usually illegally) online. Daisy Abbott has discussed how these recordings and images taken from broadcasts can be repurposed by audiences to create alternative online archives (Abbott, 2015). The function of broadcasts as archives is also discussed by Jami Rogers (2018) and by Daisy Abbott and Claire Read (2017).

This thesis explores the ways of watching and engaging with contemporary Shakespeare performance that open up for audiences when such performances are digitally distributed. I am particularly interested in how audiences are engaging with different forms of Shakespeare broadcast at their respective points of reception and in what impact these emerging modes of spectatorship might be having on how audiences are valuing their experiences with Shakespearean theatre. Much of the existing academic work on theatre broadcast experiences to date has focused on how different production and distribution strategies shape audience experience; this thesis redresses a tendency in the emerging literature to talk *about* the audience but not necessarily *to* them by taking reception as its starting point. In order to investigate the kinds of participation anecdotally illustrated above by my own experiences, this project employs a range of audience research methods that aim to capture and understand how actual audiences are experiencing, engaging with, and valuing, Shakespeare in performance via digital distribution.

This research extends and deepens the conversation around broadcast experiences by focusing specifically on the multiple conditions and contexts of reception created by different forms of broadcast. In order to explore these reception contexts, the investigation is structured around three key sites of 'encounter' made possible by digital distribution: the cinema, the school, and online. Although these are not the only sites of encounter created by broadcasts, focusing on these three reception contexts means that this thesis can begin to investigate where, how, and why audiences are encountering Shakespeare in performance through digital distribution. Moving away from discussions focused on individual broadcasts illuminates how broadcast experiences depend on these elements, resulting in multiple possible experiences. This diversity of experience challenges the prevailing

tendency in critical work to speak of the 'theatre broadcast experience' either as a singular entity, or as shorthand for cinematic reception. Indeed, this thesis demonstrates that each of these 'encounters' constitutes a distinct experience of Shakespeare in performance in which audiences negotiate their geographical, and sometimes temporal, distance from the stage differently, creating specific relationships with theatre and Shakespeare.

The audience research undertaken here further demonstrates that multiple approaches exist even within each kind of 'encounter', something that is especially evident in the reception of online broadcasts. Whilst the order of the chapters – cinema, school, and then online – only partially reflects the chronological development of theatre broadcasting, it does trace an increasing involvement by audience members in shaping their own experiences.[3] As the potential sites of reception fragment from a predetermined number of screening venues, to schools and classrooms, and then to a potentially infinite number of internet-connected devices accessed in a potentially infinite number of places and times, the degree of control that theatre companies have over how their production is received and experienced decreases, and the agency of audiences in deciding how they watch increases.

Online audiences are able to employ modes of participation more commonly associated with the consumption of media and digital content than with the theatre, and this thesis appears to demonstrate a move from modes of remote participation that seek to replicate theatrical experiences, to ones that reject the theatrical in favour of access and convenience. However, looking closely at audience

[3] Cinema broadcasts do predate school and online broadcasts by a few years, but have not been replaced by them, and all now exist alongside each other in the contemporary theatrical ecology.

experiences and behaviours shows that the move towards online reception does not necessarily correlate with a rejection of 'theatrical' modes of reception. Instead, I argue that encounters with Shakespeare in performance, through all forms of broadcast, often involve complex negotiations between theatrical and digital modes of participation. Indeed, my research shows that digital modes of participation are often used to recreate, and even exaggerate, aspects of spectatorship we might usually associate with the theatre, such as co-presence, community, and focused attention. Such findings prompt important questions about what exactly it is that audiences value about their encounters with theatre and Shakespeare, and how those things might be possible to access and experience outside of the theatre. Rather than demonstrating the devaluation of in-person forms of theatre experience, I argue that audience experiences with theatre broadcasts require an expanded definition of what it means to be an audience for theatre and, by extension, for Shakespeare.

Exploring how audiences actually engage with, negotiate, and value their digital experiences raises important questions about what might count as a theatrical experience in the twenty-first century, about what is at stake in defining this and for whom, and about the interventions that digital distribution might be making in how Shakespeare in performance continues to be valued. In this investigation, modes of participation, or questions about where and how audiences watch, reveal themselves to be tightly bound up with ideas about value, and as such, value is a central theme of this thesis. In their hybridity, and thus in their ability to create new ways of engaging with Shakespeare performance, these broadcasts disrupt models of value traditionally associated with the act of watching theatre, becoming a focal point for discussions (and assumptions) about the relative values of live theatre and digital

media experiences. Discussions about value and participation are further heightened by the addition of Shakespeare, with Shakespeare broadcasts functioning as a site around which questions of Shakespeare's cultural value can be further contested.

Implicit in these discussions is the idea – sometimes manifested as an anxiety, and sometimes as a hope – that watching Shakespeare through media other than live theatre has the power to alter Shakespeare's association with 'high' cultural value. Concluding his discussion of cinema broadcasts Michael D. Friedman predicts that 'as such broadcasts become more popular and commonplace, the consumption of Shakespeare in performance will seem less and less like an elite activity' (2016: 480). Such a conclusion relies on the assumption that cinemas are egalitarian spaces free from elitism, an idea that is problematised in Chapter 1. Nevertheless, I am interested in the idea that the way in which something is viewed or experienced can alter both how that thing is valued by individuals, and how it comes to be valued more widely.

Interrogating ideas about the value of media and theatre experiences, each chapter pays close attention to the ways in which audiences themselves value their screen encounters with Shakespeare in performance. Looking at how audience motivations are shaped by preconceived ideas about the value of seeing Shakespeare performed, and at how they understand the value of those encounters after the event, illuminates the importance of audiences in the circulation of Shakespeare's cultural value. Following Kirsty Sedgman, I approach value as a process, something that is constantly being defined and re-defined by multiple experiences and encounters (2016: 11). I argue that, rather than being passive receivers of Shakespeare's value through performance, audiences are active agents in the creation and circulation of Shakespeare's cultural value. In negotiating how

they engage with Shakespeare in performance, broadcast audiences have found alternative ways of valuing not just Shakespeare, but theatre and performance. This, I suggest, has potentially wider implications for how institutions value Shakespeare and in turn how Shakespeare's value may be perceived more generally in the future.

In the remainder of this introduction I outline some of the fundamental concepts and ideas that form the basis of my approach to broadcast audiences, position this research within a number of critical fields, and set out some of the foundational arguments of the thesis. Understanding broadcast audiences necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that takes into account theories of both media and theatre experiences. The first section below explores some of these theories through the lens of my key structuring concept: the encounter. The concept of the encounter is a particularly useful one for exploring theatre broadcast spectatorship because, as I explore below, the face-to-face encounter is often considered to be the defining element of the theatrical experience. I trace how the absence of the face-to-face encounter in broadcast experiences has led to the argument that broadcast experiences constitute something other than experiences with theatre, and as such, that theatre broadcasting should be studied as a form in and of itself. I argue, however, that whilst such a distinction is helpful in approaching broadcast production, it is less useful for understanding how those broadcasts are received and experienced by audiences. I propose that approaching broadcasts from the point of reception or 'encounter' enables access to the complex negotiations that audiences undertake between theatre and media modes of reception when they watch and engage with them.

The various arguments discussed in the next section also reveal the way in which ideas about media and theatre spectatorship are bound up with, and informed

by, ideas about privilege and value. I explore scholarship that has wrestled with ideas around Shakespeare and cultural value, and about value and performance, and outline my own approach to understanding value in Shakespeare broadcast experiences. My focus on reception contexts and modes of participation, and the idea that they can potentially alter how Shakespeare in performance comes to be valued, has required a research approach that takes the experience of actual audiences into account. In the final section of this introduction, I consider how researchers within Shakespeare and theatre studies have approached audience research. I set out my own broad approach to broadcast audiences, providing an outline of the methodologies applied in each chapter.

The Broadcast Encounter: Theatre, the Digital, and Contexts of Reception

> The real enchantment of theatre happens in the encounter between actors and audience members. This encounter occurs in the theatre, as opposed to the cinema, because theatre is a live performance. The actor's performance influences the audience, and the audience member's responses influence the actors.
>
> (Heim, 2016: 2)

> The reality of our exposure to a media landscape colonized by numerous interfaces leading to an environment constructed around competing elements is that a viewer will never be able to attend to everything. The outcome does not have to be as negative as this would seem to suggest. Instead, we can find agency in our relational negotiations within the spatio-temporal architecture of a system. A facet of digital technologies, and of technologies more generally, is not that they separate us from the world, but rather that they create within it distinct kinds of engagements.
>
> (Wood, 2007: 164)

The first quotation above, taken from Caroline Heim's *Audience as Performer: The Changing Role of Theatre Audiences in the Twenty-First Century* (2016), rehearses some familiar ideas about the nature of the theatrical encounter. Heim locates the specialness of theatre – its 'real enchantment' – in the physical and temporal co-presence of audience and actor, something that she explicitly states is absent from experiences of cinema. This comparison of theatre with media in order to assert theatre's primacy as a mode of engagement is a common trope in performance studies work on the theatrical experience. Nicholas Ridout also insists that 'theatre involves a face-to-face encounter', writing that the reverse gaze, the ability of the actor to look directly at an audience member and vice versa, 'is perhaps the key signifier of [theatre's] ontological distinction from film and television' (2006: 15, 88). The idea that the ontology of theatre and live performance is, at its root, dependent on an encounter taking place in a specific time and space is perhaps most famously argued by Peggy Phelan in her statement that 'performance's life is only in the present' and her assertion that any recorded or mediated iteration represents something other than performance (1993: 146). In order to *really* experience theatre, these performance studies scholars argue, you have to 'be there' when and where it happens.

These definitions seemingly preclude broadcast experiences from being considered as encounters with theatre. The broadcast encounter happens at a geographical remove from the originating performance, and increasingly, at a different time, and so lacks the 'face-to-face' element so important in Heim's, Ridout's and Phelan's formations of the theatrical encounter. However, the emphasis on 'live' in the marketing of projects such as NT Live, as well as early research which found that audiences in cinemas were experiencing many of the same benefits as

those watching live, has led scholars and commentators to investigate the nature of the broadcast experience and its relationship to live theatre further, especially focusing on the challenges these broadcasts present to notions of 'liveness'.[4] Although they do wrestle with ideas about how different kinds of presence function in these experiences, the focus on the concept of 'liveness' in these discussions tends to result in circular arguments about how the 'live' is deteriorating as a category rather than illuminating the ways in which audiences are actually experiencing broadcasts.

More recent work on theatre broadcasts has attempted to move past the critical preoccupation with liveness to examine other elements of the theatre broadcast experience. Noting the proliferation of Shakespeare broadcasts beyond productions that are filmed, distributed and received simultaneously, Aebischer and Greenhalgh write that '[i]nstead of concentrating on simultaneity of production and reception', their collection is concerned with 'how audiences participate in the broadcast experience through a range of interactions, both in-person and digital, with broadcasts and fellow audience members across geographical and temporal divides' (2018: 8). As they demonstrate, focusing on the reception of broadcasts displaces 'liveness' from dominating discussions of experience; many of the experiences audiences have with broadcast content are no longer 'live', and recent research has

[4] I outline early discussions on theatre broadcasting and liveness in Chapter 1. Notably, these include the first book-length discussion of theatre broadcasting by Martin Barker (2013), in which a chapter is devoted to outlining and bringing together relevant debates around the issue of 'liveness' from different disciplines, and which later documents the results of research with audiences at Picturehouse cinemas that sought to further understand the way in which audiences of broadcasts experience the live. Arguments about broadcasts and liveness also feature in Cochrane and Bonner (2014), Purcell (2014a), Way (2017), and Stone (2016).

even suggested that the liveness of a broadcast is now no longer particularly important to audiences (Aebischer and Greenhalgh 2018: 7; Reidy *et al*. 2016: 13).

Broadly, I follow Aebischer, Greenhalgh and Osborne in moving on from a focus on liveness in this thesis. The majority of the experiences I ask audiences about were not 'live', with most of them being temporally delayed, and it is experience and engagement, rather than liveness, that is the central focus of my analysis. However, whilst the essays in *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast* have audience experience as their focus, the majority of them (including my own contribution) do not engage with or consider the actual experience of audience members. Here, I extend the approach taken in that collection by asking audiences about their experiences and focusing specifically on the spaces and contexts of reception. As a consequence, 'liveness' re-emerges as an important aspect of each broadcast encounter. The ways in which broadcast audiences negotiate and value theatrical liveness is a recurring theme throughout, and is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 when considering the way online audiences construct a sense of liveness separate from either spatial or temporal co-presence. Investigating how audiences manage and value liveness as part of their broadcast encounters allows a consideration of liveness as a condition of reception, rather than as something determined by production or distribution strategies.

Although theatre broadcasts have the potential to destabilise concepts of liveness, definitions of what theatre broadcast experiences actually *are* have continued to hinge on their lack of a face-to-face encounter. As I outline in Chapter 1, the trajectory of criticism has moved from a discourse focused on loss (Wyver, 2014a: 117-118), in which broadcasts are criticised for how they fail to capture the theatrical experience, to understanding theatre broadcasts as a hybrid, but distinct,

form. Critics including Stephen Purcell (2014a) and John Wyver (2014a) have argued that theatre broadcasts constitute a category in their own right and that they represent a different, but not necessarily lesser, experience to live theatre. Exploring the hybridity of cinema broadcasts, Michael D. Friedman similarly concludes that since 'broadcasts do not fit comfortably into any single category of media [...] it seems appropriate to create a new one, with its own standards and conventions, to contain them' (2016 : 479).

Establishing difference has been critically beneficial, advancing the conversation around broadcasts past comparisons with live theatre experiences, and drawing attention to the creative processes involved in the production of broadcasts. However, as Katherine Rowe has warned in relation to the ghettoization of screen Shakespeares in academic discourse, isolating a particular medium for the purposes of study can create a 'medium-specific rubric' that may reinforce technophobic 'media scripts' which favour stage over screen (2008: 36). Media scripts, she writes, 'incorporate a host of unspoken meanings: codifying attitudes towards different media, communications strategies associated with them, and norms governing the way we handle them' (37). Applied to broadcasts, this could mean that whilst the act of creating a new category is designed to avoid positioning broadcasts as lesser-than theatre, it could nevertheless risk reinforcing a hierarchal distinction between stage and screen experiences.

Moreover, and perhaps more importantly for this thesis, in terms of understanding broadcast reception 'containing' broadcasts as a distinct form risks eliding the crucial ways in which modes of broadcast spectatorship are linked to different kinds of media spectatorship, especially theatrical spectatorship. Each encounter with Shakespeare broadcasts described in the chapters below is shaped

by the understanding that it offers an experience of theatre. From cinemas charging a premium for theatre broadcast tickets, to the excitement drummed up by live participation in a school broadcast, to audience members going out of their way to recreate theatrical modes of spectatorship at home whilst they watch online, each encounter is invested with a particular value because it is – or is positioned as – a theatrical experience. Audiences are well aware of the differences between digital and in-person theatrical spectatorship; nevertheless, many of them see these experiences as important and valuable encounters with theatre. Denying that they are such not only disregards audience experience but obscures the nuance and complexity of those experiences and what they can reveal about the nature of theatrical exchange. Although there may be no face-to-face encounter, I argue that it is essential to approach and understand broadcast experiences as encounters with theatre as well as with digital and screen media. Doing so does not discount the specificity of the face-to-face encounter or replace it (indeed, broadcast encounters rely on an audience being in the theatre at the point of recording) but acknowledges that other modes of participation with theatre are possible.

Indeed, I would argue that it is now possible to extend most definitions of theatre that are based on the face-to-face encounter to include the altered encounters created by digital distribution. By Ridout's own admission, the theatrical 'encounter will always be compromised by its circumstances', stating that 'there is no unmediated relation to be found in the theatre' (2006: 15). Ridout is not referring to technological mediation here, but we might begin to consider how his description of theatre as 'a constellation of bungled, missed or difficult encounters' could include the altered encounters with theatre offered by digital distribution (2006: 15). In his later book, *Theatre & Ethics*, Ridout argues that the face-to-face encounter is vital to

theatre in that, through physical presence, it poses ethical situations and problems in ways not available in film or through novels. ‘Being there’, Ridout argues, is as much about ethical, social, and political relationships and responsibilities as it is about simple physical co-presence. He explains:

> to be there is, first, simply to be present, to attend, as at the theatre; to be there is, second, to be part of it, to participate, as in politics, for example; and finally, to be theatre is to be there for someone, to engage in a relationship of care or support, to accept an ethical responsibility for the other.
> (Ridout, 2009: 64)

In a world where digital communication technology offers us new ways of being present through video calls and instant messaging, of attending and participating through social media, and of caring for and supporting one another through online support groups, then it is possible to extend the concept of an ethical and theatrical encounter to include those encounters that do not require physical presence. As Stephen Purcell notes, ‘if ‘being there’ remains, for now, the dominant criterion of liveness, then digital technologies are making it increasingly difficult to determine what, precisely, ‘being there’ constitutes’ (2014a: 222).

Even Heim’s argument about how theatre audiences perform their role as audiences, which she sees as being dependent on the physical co-presence of audience member and actor, can be adapted to include digital spectatorship. Based on Erving Goffman’s theories of social performance, Heim argues that ‘the encounter with others [...] constructs the individual as performer’ and that in the theatre, ‘audience members have encounters with actors and with each other, during which time they perform their repertoire of actions’ (2016: 3). This thesis demonstrates that even whilst audiences of theatre broadcasts are removed from the theatre, their experiences are full of encounters with others. From the other audience members in

the cinema, to fellow students and teachers in schools, to virtual exchanges enacted through social media, these encounters construct individuals as performers in different ways, offering audience members new ways of being, and performing their role as, theatre audiences.[5] By focusing on the sites of reception, each chapter of this thesis is able to explore the multiple encounters that make up and influence audience experiences of theatre broadcasts. It examines how audiences negotiate 'being there' and what this means for their experiences. In doing so, it argues that these experiences are not oppositional to the face-to-face encounters in the theatre, but rather that theatre reception operates alongside a spectrum of encounters, including failed and partial ones, and that the reception of digital broadcasts constitutes part of this spectrum.

As much as broadcasts are encounters with theatre, they are also undeniably encounters with the digital. Across all three encounters, audiences watch through different iterations of digital media including digital cinema and streamed online video. As a result, this is necessarily a study of media audiences as well as a study of distributed theatre audiences. Influenced by the media scripts that Rowe describes, theatre and performance studies has tended to view media audiences with suspicion, often characterising them as passive in comparison to more active theatre audiences. In Chapter 1, I explore how ideas about passive media audiences dominated early discussions of cinema broadcasts. For these critics, the mediation of theatre represented a loss of agency and autonomy in the way that the camerawork sought to control attention, removing the option to choose where to

[5] I apply Heim's theory of the audience as performer to broadcast audiences in Nicholas (2018).

look. Online audiences have also subsequently suffered from technophobic media scripts, characterised as distracted and disengaged.

Media studies provides an alternative way of viewing the screen audience. As Aylish Wood suggests in the quote at the beginning of this section, 'distracted' modes of viewing are not necessarily negative encounters. Negotiating what she describes as the 'spatio-temporal architecture of a system' can, in fact, be a source of agency for users (or audiences), creating distinct modes of engaging with the world (2007: 164). Wood refers specifically to encounters with the interface or screen here, arguing that the opportunity for choice *within* a game, animation or film engenders agency in the audience. However, her focus on attention and agency is also useful for thinking about the agency of digital broadcast audiences in their expanded choice of where and how to watch. Like Wood, I argue that far from being passive, audiences of digitally distributed theatre are active agents in the creation of their own experiences with the screen.

The forms of agency experienced by broadcast audiences differ greatly across reception contexts. It is therefore important to consider these experiences not only as encounters with theatre and with the digital, but as encounters that are situated in and shaped by their conditions of reception. The audience research in each chapter reveals how audiences were involved in negotiating three kinds of 'spatio-temporal architecture': that of the stage production as mediated by the camera; that of the screen itself and the different modes of engagement that it affords; and that of their physical reception contexts. They are encounters with the physical environment of the cinema, the school, and the home, as well as with the interface of the screen and the digital environment beyond it. The affordances of these spaces and the other people audiences might encounter in them may shape

how and when they watch, as might an audience member's association with those spaces. Additionally, broadcast experiences are encounters in time as well as space, and each reception context has its own temporality; in the school and the home especially, other pressures and responsibilities may alter how broadcasts are experienced through time.

The spatio-temporal architectures, both digital and physical, within which audiences experience broadcasts determine the degree of agency that those audiences have in shaping their own experiences. Understanding these broadcasts as hybrid, not only in their production and distribution but in their sites of reception, is therefore key to understanding the way in which audiences experience and value their encounters with digitally distributed theatre. The added value associated with theatre broadcasts – economic or otherwise – demonstrates how broadcasts themselves are infused with media scripts that affect how audiences approach and value their experiences. Making theatre available in cinemas, in schools, and online potentially opens it up to being consumed like any other type of media content, but this research shows that this is rarely the case. Its status as *theatre,* and here, as Shakespeare, influences both how institutions choose to make productions available and how audiences value them. In the next section, I set out how ideas about value are relevant to understanding the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts. Whilst existing media scripts are central to this, I argue that the different kinds of agency that broadcasts offer audiences have the potential to result in new scripts for watching and valuing Shakespeare in performance.

Valuing Shakespeare: Institutions, Audiences and Modes of Participation

In the preface to her book *Locating the Audience: How People Found Value in National Theatre Wales*, Kirsty Sedgman describes how, despite the fact that a new national theatre company was being founded, the wider context of arts funding cuts around the time of the National Theatre Wales' launch created a sense of threat that prompted articulations about the value of theatre and culture. She contends that 'in such times of crisis, the arguments surrounding the value of culture – what things like theatre do with, for and to people – seem to be brought more sharply into focus' (2016: xii). The idea that perceived threats to theatre spark renewed debates about value is reflected in the raft of concerns from theatre-makers, venue programmers, cultural commentators, and audiences in reaction to the launch of NT Live in 2009.

These debates are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, but include the worry that broadcasts fundamentally degrade the theatrical experience, reducing a collective, social and immersive experience into streamable content, and the concern that broadcasts might cannibalise audiences for live theatre. Those making such arguments often locate the value of theatre in the co-presence of audience and performer and see the rise of broadcasting as representing a threat to this model of value. At the same time, digital distribution has been positioned as a *response* to a different crisis facing the UK theatrical ecology: a declining, demographically narrow, and aging audience. In response to concerns about undermining the core values of theatre, institutions wielded their own, well-established, arguments about the value

(and even duty) of making theatre accessible, and of reaching new, broader, and potentially more diverse audiences.

Digital distribution brings arguments about the value of theatre and culture more sharply into focus. Along with asking what theatre does with, for and to people, it also prompts questions about what counts as theatre, and whom it might be for. Arguments about the value of broadcasting are situated in, and influenced by, wider ongoing debates about the value of theatre, the arts, and culture more generally.[6] Additionally, in this project, articulations of value speak directly to related debates about the cultural value of Shakespeare. In *Cultural-Value in Twenty-First-Century England: The Case of Shakespeare* (2014), Kate McLuskie and Kate Rumbold use Shakespeare as a case study in order to explore how cultural value is discussed, conferred, and endorsed by UK arts institutions, governmental policy and the market. They suggest that whilst Shakespeare 'appears to be an incontestable location for value', articulations of Shakespeare's value have had to respond to changing models of value across time (51). They chart a shift from assertions of Shakespeare's 'intrinsic' value, something inherent in the object of 'Shakespeare' that can be accessed by audiences and readers, to discussions of Shakespeare's value in 'instrumental' terms – locating value in the effects of engagement with Shakespeare (increased confidence of school children, for example) facilitated by various institutions with an investment in maintaining and reproducing Shakespeare's cultural value.

McLuskie and Rumbold demonstrate that audience experience has become central to the way in which institutions articulate and measure cultural value.

[6] The various ways in which the arts have been discussed as socially valuable are outlined in Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett (2008) *The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History*.

Describing John Holden's triangular model of cultural value devised in 2006, which distinguished between 'institutional' 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic' value, they show how understandings of 'intrinsic' value have shifted from 'the inherent qualities of a cultural event or object […] to the public, and their estimation and experience of that event or object' (153). This model dismisses the idea that art and culture can have value in and of itself, and argues instead that value is located in the encounter of individuals with that artwork or event. Centering audience experience as the locus of value is, McLuskie and Rumbold argue, problematic in a number of ways not least because by 'locating value primarily in the moment of encounter, policy-makers and analysts occlude the decision-making that has often already determined what constitutes "culture", and ascribed value to it, before the encounter takes place' (155). Focusing on experience alone, they suggest, ignores the way in which those experiences are framed and shaped by the value already ascribed to the object by institutions and audience members.

Whilst locating the creation of value in the encounter, ultimately these articulations of value fail to capture the complex ways that value functions at the level of reception. Instead, experience acts as a useful proxy for reinforcing or measuring other types of institutional or instrumental value. In an earlier article on the use of new media by Shakespeare institutions, Rumbold argues that the discourse of 'interactivity and user-generated creativity, associated with new technology' is an extension of the relocation of value from the building or institution to the visitor (2010: 314). Rumbold argues that in using digital technologies, institutions are involved in performing 'double maneuvers that efface their traditional role as cultural gatekeepers and reassert their importance as mediators of cultural experience' by positioning themselves and their buildings as the source of value

(315). Locating value in the encounter means that even when those encounters happen outside of the institution, that value is redirected back to the institution. This mechanism is certainly at work at some level in each of the broadcast encounters that I describe below. From an institutional perspective, remote encounters with Shakespeare are valued less for the unique and potentially new experiences that they create than for the access that they provide to the already-valued theatrical performances of already-valued Shakespeare, in already-valued spaces.

However, an awareness of this mechanism only explains the way in which institutions may be attempting to determine how these experiences are valued, rather than how they are *actually* received and valued by audiences in practice. As Kirsty Sedgman argues, audience-centered work can help break down divisions between intrinsic and instrumental ideas of value 'by re-envisioning value as a process rather than an outcome' (2016: 3). For Sedgman, talking to audiences reveals how value functions as 'something that is constantly negotiated and always in flux' rather than an end point or outcome of an experience (11). Where intrinsic or instrumental models of value might position audiences as passive receivers of cultural value, or position *experience* itself as a locus of value, such an approach positions audiences as active agents in the negotiation, creation and continued circulation of cultural value.

Like Sedgman, I am less interested in determining the value of a particular production or performance, or, in this case, the value of Shakespeare broadcasts in general than in interrogating how audiences negotiate different models of value in order to find value in their broadcast experiences. Sedgman's approach to understanding the way that value functions in performance acknowledges that whilst 'audiences are active agents whose encounters with performance are messy, rich,

multifaceted, individualized affairs', those encounters 'are nonetheless shaped in equally complex ways by all the factors surrounding the production process' (16). Taking into account the way that personal experience is related to the external factors of production, Sedgman figures theatre audiences 'neither as "decoders" of meaning […] nor as "resistant" entities, but as people drawing on multiple orientations as part of elaborate viewing strategies' (16). I follow Sedgman in approaching and understanding value as a process, using audience research to examine how audiences articulate what they did and did not value about their encounters. Similarly, I am interested in how broadcast audiences draw on 'multiple orientations', including institutional models of value, to construct complex viewing strategies.

I argue that the viewing strategies employed by audiences, and the negotiations that they make around value, are further complicated by the focus on Shakespeare, and the fact that these audiences are encountering performance across different reception contexts and through different forms of digital media. As McLuskie and Rumbold demonstrate, Shakespeare is valued in multiple ways in the twenty-first century and the responses from audiences explored in the chapters below show how ideas about Shakespeare's value can shape audiences' approaches to spectatorship. In the broadcast encounters I describe, ideas about Shakespeare's value intersect, and sometimes conflict, with ideas about the values of particular modes of media participation. Both the media themselves, and the reception contexts within which they are encountered are bound up with their own particular associations and assumptions about experience and value. In these experiences, then, audiences must negotiate not only theatrical spectatorship and production processes, but distribution practices, reception contexts, Shakespeare,

and ideas about media spectatorship. As the multiple orientations that they can employ proliferate, the complexity of the viewing strategies that audiences construct increases, making their negotiations with value even more complicated to understand.

As theatrical reception expands out of the theatre and across media and reception contexts, opening up new ways of engaging with and valuing performance, conceiving of value as a process becomes increasingly useful. This thesis demonstrates how, for broadcast audiences, value is mutable rather than fixed. Each encounter with Shakespeare in performance described below is both an expression of value – a culmination of previously held valuations that motivate audiences to watch and shape how they participate – and a potential moment for altering ideas about that value. The potential of broadcast encounters to shift how audiences value Shakespeare performance is evident in the attempts by broadcasting theatres and companies to manage reception from afar. Introductions and interval features at cinema screenings, tightly controlled Q&A sessions in the RSC's Schools' Broadcasts, and the restriction of how long online broadcasts can be watched on 'catch-up' for, are illustrative examples of what Peter Kirwan has described as an 'anxiety over reception' from broadcast companies (2014a: 276). These features can be read as attempts to determine, to a certain extent, how these experiences are watched and received and thus how they are valued by audiences. They reveal the investments that institutions have in certain ways of approaching productions, acting as public statements of value and enabling an analysis of broadcasts that both considers how institutions attempt to determine value and, through audience research, how audiences respond to those attempts.

Including audiences and the way they participate in a consideration of value offers a different perspective on theories of how Shakespeare's cultural value functions and circulates. Broadcast audiences can be active agents in shaping their own experiences and in negotiating how they value those experiences in conversation with institutions. However, their 'messy, rich, multifaceted, individualized' experiences, are not isolated from institutional models of value (Sedgman, 2016: 16). If, as the institutional anxiety over reception indicates, modes of participation can alter how audiences value Shakespeare performance, then audiences are also active agents, through their individual engagements and valuations, in the wider circulation of Shakespeare's cultural value. In changing where and how audiences watch, broadcasts have the potential to change how audiences value Shakespeare. In turn this has an impact on how institutions themselves continue to articulate their own value, and the value of performance and spectatorship.

Approaching value as a process means that in this thesis I am able to consider the impact that broadcasts have on the shifting relationships between institutions and audiences, and how value functions as part of these relationships. In each chapter I pay close attention to how the theatre institutions involved attempt to determine value for their audiences and to how audiences actually valued their encounters. Each reception context also offers its own distinct framework of value: screening venues actively promote the value of local and communal reception; schools frame experiences as educationally valuable; and audiences value the convenience, flexibility and mobility of online consumption. In each chapter I explore how these contexts alter the way in which audiences experience and value broadcasts and Shakespeare.

As I have argued so far, finding out about these remote reception contexts and investigating how broadcast audiences negotiate value and hybridity as part of their encounters requires understanding the experience of actual audience members at the point of reception. Undertaking audience research, however, is fraught with methodological complications and is made more complex by the fact that the audiences I seek to investigate here are geographically dispersed and access performance across different media in different contexts. In the final part of this introduction I explore the approaches that other researchers have taken to theatre audience research and set out the rationale for my own methodological approach. In doing so, I also provide an outline of the structure of the thesis, including the methods, focus, and key arguments of each chapter.

Talking to the Theatre (Broadcast) Audience: Methodology and Research Design

In her 2009 book *Theatre & Audience*, Helen Freshwater provides a succinct overview of how theatre and performance studies has approached the audience. She notes that whilst the audience has been central to twentieth-century theories of theatre, there has been a lack of sustained critical study of audiences themselves, writing that 'academic publications which address the question of theatre audiences exclusively and directly are relatively few and far between' (11). Within work that does address the question of the audience, Freshwater further points out that 'engagement with "ordinary" members of the audience is notably absent' observing that, in comparison to researchers working on television and film, 'almost no one in

theatre studies seems to be interested in exploring what actual audience members make of a performance' (29).

As Freshwater points out, work within theatre studies that has addressed the question of the audience has not always made talking to them a priority. Kirsty Sedgman identifies three broad approaches – policy-driven studies, phenomenology, and cognitive science – that have been interested in audience experiences but tend not to consider what audiences have to say (2016: 9). Both phenomenology and cognitive approaches are interested in the processes of spectatorship and the experience of the spectator during the moment of the theatrical event. Phenomenological approaches draw on the embodied response of the individual, often the author, to explore and reflect on the encounter with performance and its effects, whilst approaches based on cognition or neuroaesthetics such as those in Bruce McConachie's *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (2008) are interested in examining the mental processes of watching theatre. Cognitive approaches tend to avoid seeking audience accounts of their experiences since, as Matthew Reason writes in a special edition of *About Performance* on spectatorship, the attempt of a researcher to access a true account of audience experience through '(self-)conscious reflections on the experience after the event might itself disrupt participants' ability to know their own feelings' (2010b: 18). However, by attempting to access the 'truth' of the theatrical encounter by bypassing audience description, such approaches, Sedgman suggests, 'neatly overlook the different possibilities for learning about audiences (their emotive engagements as well as their mental processes) that alternative approaches may offer' (2016: 10). Both phenomenological and cognitive approaches prioritise the

individual over the collective, the singular over the multiple, and the moment of performance over its lasting effects.

Conversely, policy-driven approaches to the theatre audience are usually less interested in the processes of reception than in identifying the type of audience attending and their motivations for doing so. Reports undertaken by agencies such as Arts Council England or the Arts and Humanities Research Council into theatre audiences are often backed by industry stakeholders or governmental funding and, as Sedgman notes, are often designed to find out how to attract new or more audiences, or to promote or prove the value of the arts (2016: 8).[7] Similarly, audience research undertaken by theatres themselves often seeks to discover information about their audiences to help inform future decisions about programming and marketing. This research provides an abundance of (mostly quantitative) data about theatre audiences, so much so that Susan Bennett has argued that there 'is little need or merit in the duplication' of such audience research by theatre and performance scholars (2006: 228).[8]

However, the data generated by policy-driven audience research is motivated by a variety of (often commercial) agendas, with questions designed to elicit specific information that answers a set of, usually quite narrow, research questions. Such

[7] As I discuss in Chapter 1, this is also true of much of the audience research into theatre broadcasting, which has mostly been backed by industry bodies and has focused on establishing the impact of broadcasts – positive and negative – on the theatre industry.

[8] Bennett's own, now foundational, text on audiences, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (1997), applies reader-response theories, as well as psychoanalytical and feminist theories of spectatorship, to analyse the reception of 'non-traditional' theatre. Drawing on reviews and her own close readings of productions, Bennett also considers how the act of attending theatre in different spaces might impact reception. Although Bennett acknowledges that 'theatre audiences bring to any performance a horizon of cultural and ideological expectations' which influence the reception of a production, she does not interrogate this further by talking to audiences themselves (1997: 98).

research tends to be less interested in the processes of meaning-making or in exploring the nuances of theatrical reception. Moreover, as I explore in Chapter 3 in relation to the findings about 'liveness' in the *Live-to-Digital* report (Reidy *et al.*, 2016), the headline findings of this research can sometimes be misleading. Whilst useful, this data is usually unable to answer the different questions we might have as academics about the nature of the theatrical experience or the ways in which audiences value their experiences. These reports should therefore be seen as documents to be interrogated carefully, rather than unquestionably treated as sources that are able to provide us with facts about theatre audiences.

Although still a marginal site of research, a number of theatre, performance, and Shakespeare scholars have engaged with audience research methodologies to explore different facets of the theatre audience experience. In the decade following the publication of Freshwater's call to arms, interest in applying empirical audience-research methods to theatre audiences has continued to grow, and there is now a fairly significant body of research and methodological approaches on which to draw, alongside work on audiences in media, film, and television studies, disciplines which have longer and more established traditions of undertaking audience research. Although I do not have the space here to provide a comprehensive overview of these studies, it is worth briefly considering some of those that are most relevant to this project and have been influential in informing my own approach.[9]

[9] I focus here on work that applies audience research methodology to research theatrical reception. Freshwater's *Theatre & Audience* (2009) provides a concise overview of other approaches to spectatorship in theatre and performance studies. Sedgman (2016) also provides a critical overview of approaches to audiences to contextualise her own audience research. Woods (2012) also provides an overview of approaches to theatre audiences in the introduction to her thesis, discussed below. Although I do not discuss it in detail here, audience research methodologies from media studies have also informed my approach including those set out in Schrøder *et al*. (2003) and Nightingale ed. (2014).

In *Shakespeare and Chekhov in Production and Reception: Theatrical Events and their Audiences* (2005), media-studies scholar John Tulloch employs focus groups, audience case studies, surveys and interviews in order to explore the reception of a number of Shakespeare and Chekhov productions in the USA, Australia and the UK. Tulloch's research focus is on how being an audience member forms part of people's day-to-day lives, situating his work within so-called 'third-generation audience analysis', which seeks to 'recombine notions of encoded texts (and their interpellated spectators) with ethnographically orientated active audience theory and methodology' (2005: 15). By talking to and observing audiences Tulloch is able to examine how an awareness of Shakespeare and Chekhov as texts encoded as part of 'high culture' frames audience response. By taking an ethnographic approach to audiences he is also able to explore how these responses are embedded in and informed by the social and cultural lives of audiences. Using particular interviewees as case studies, he demonstrates how 'risk' – for example financial risk or the risk of travelling to a performance venue – functions as a part of audiences' experiences of live performance.

In exploring how Shakespeare's status as a canonical institution plays out at the level of reception, Tulloch's study remains a relative exception in a substantial body of work on Shakespeare audiences. As Stephen Purcell points out, the 'actual responses of modern Shakespearean audiences remain largely undocumented' (2013: 153). In his own book, *Shakespeare and Audience in Practice*, Purcell draws on detailed observation and a small number of post-show surveys to examine the effect of place and situation on the reception of three different performances of Tim Crouch's *I, Malvolio* (2010). Shakespeare is central to Purcell's analysis; he suggests that that the plays have participation written into them and that they 'invite

audiences to converse and to play with them rather than interpellating spectators into predetermined subject positions' (2013: 72). Purcell is also interested in how the status of Shakespeare constructs a particular mode of participation, a concept that Penelope Woods has investigated further in an institutional context at Shakespeare's Globe. Woods' doctoral thesis, *Globe Audiences: Spectatorship and Reconstruction at Shakespeare's Globe* (2012), draws on a combination of audience research methodologies including in-person post-show interviews with audiences and an expert 'long-table' to explore the ways in which spectatorship at the reconstructed Globe is produced by the space and cultural context of the theatre. She positions qualitative audience research alongside accounts of her own experience in the form of performative writing, integrating a phenomenological approach with empirical research in order to account for her own positionality and embodied experience as an audience member and researcher.

Woods concludes that the material performance conditions of the Globe, alongside the premise of historical reconstruction, create an 'unusual interpersonal politics and ethics' between actor and audience at the Globe (19). In the aforementioned investigation of how audiences responded to the inaugural season of National Theatre Wales, Kirsty Sedgman also uses audience conversation and in-depth interviews to explore how audiences negotiated their experiences in relation to material performance conditions and, specifically, in relation to their physical surroundings and the idea of a new national theatre. Drawing on cultural studies methodologies, she approaches audience talk discursively, paying attention not only to what audiences say, but how they say it. This approach allows Sedgman to examine the discourses that audiences draw on when talking about performance, to investigate the wider power structures in operation in theatrical exchange, and how

this impacts '*who feels they have the right to say what, about what, on what grounds*' (2016: 19; emphasis in original).

These studies show what empirical audience research can offer to an understanding of how specific elements of the theatrical experience – whether Shakespeare, a particular theatre, or wider systems of value – determine audience response. The approaches and specific methodologies that they use are driven by the nature of the audiences they are studying, and by their research questions. Similarly, my own methodological approach has been driven by my research questions and the fact that theatre broadcast audiences are dispersed across media, space, and time. The answers to fairly basic questions about how audiences are engaging with and watching broadcasts, and how those engagements are framed by reception contexts, are not obvious or easily accessible and so are central to my investigation. These relatively simple questions are not easily answered by looking to the fairly extensive body of policy-driven audience research into theatre broadcast reception (discussed further in Chapter 1), which has focused mainly on cinema experiences, and has tended to deal with large samples in order to provide generalisable results, rather than on the nuances of reception. Phenomenological approaches based on personal experiences – such as the majority of the essays in *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast* (2018) – can provide some indication of how audiences might be engaging with broadcasts across different contexts, but cannot account for wider experience, or for those that occur in spaces – such as schools – to which researchers do not have access as members of the public.

Finding out how audiences are watching broadcasts, and how reception conditions influence this engagement, therefore required undertaking research at various sites of broadcast reception. As I explain in greater detail below, the

methodologies applied for each kind of broadcast encounter differed, but broadly, these questions could be answered by a combination of observation and quantitative survey questions that asked audiences about when, how and with whom they watched. Additional research questions about how audiences negotiated value in their broadcast encounters, and about the existing relationships that those audiences had with Shakespeare, the theatre, other audiences, and the places in which they watched, required more in-depth methodologies designed to elicit rich qualitative responses from participants. In order to explore these questions, I used open-ended survey questions and conducted one-to-one online interviews with audience members. Because the audiences that I research here are so diverse in their modes of participation, it was necessary to apply a mix of methodological approaches across the encounters. I integrate a consideration of empirical data with an analysis of institutions and reception contexts, and with my own personal observations of experiencing the broadcasts alongside the audiences that I study. Whilst this mix of methods does not produce generalisable data about broadcast audience engagement, each chapter constitutes a case study into a type of broadcast encounter that provides new, and nuanced, insight into the reception of Shakespeare in performance through digital distribution.

In using audience research to understand theatre broadcast reception, this thesis extends the work of Martin Barker in *Live to Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting* (2013). In this early investigation into live theatre broadcasting, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1, Barker conducts surveys and interviews at theatre and opera screenings across different Picturehouse cinemas in the UK. Along with Barker's work, the majority of research so far into the digital distribution of theatre has focused on cinema reception. Using this work as a jumping

off point, Chapter 1 – 'Encountering Shakespeare in the Cinema' – investigates the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts in cinemas and other screening venues. I begin the chapter by exploring the ways in which both academics and industry have approached audiences in screening venues to date and identify that the body of literature and industry reports has rarely considered the impact of venues on shaping broadcast reception. Addressing this gap, the second half of the chapter draws on the results of audience surveys undertaken at delayed screenings of NT Live's *Macbeth* (2018) at two UK venues. Situating these results within an analysis of the venues and the way that they position theatre broadcasts, I argue that, far from being neutral spaces for experiencing Shakespeare in performance, screening venues influence the way in which audiences engage with and value their broadcast encounters. The venues themselves also emerge as valued elements in these experiences, indicating how important relationships between screening venues and their audiences are in the success of screening programmes such as NT Live.

Chapter 2 – 'Encounters in the Classroom' – explores a very different, but increasingly important, reception context for Shakespeare broadcasts: the school. A number of UK theatres have recently launched programmes that provide digital access to recorded performances in classrooms. In this chapter, I focus on the RSC's Schools' Broadcast programme, which allows registered schools to stream a recorded performance on a particular morning, aiming to create a large, and temporally simultaneous, community of reception across schools in the UK. The ethical issues raised by undertaking research with under-18s meant that any surveys, interviews, or focus groups with participating students would have required consent from parents and students, making such methodologies unfeasible for a project of this scale. Instead, I observed two RSC broadcasts – *Twelfth Night* and

Macbeth – at two UK secondary schools, spoke to teachers about their experiences with broadcasts and Shakespeare, and analysed the way in which students, teachers and the RSC used social media as part of these broadcasts.

Unlike the silent auditorium of the screening venue, the school was a noisy site of reception, making observation a viable and unusually fruitful way of understanding how these broadcasts play out within schools. I draw on my own written accounts of the two observations to explore key elements and themes of these experiences. Firstly, I examine how Shakespeare spectatorship was positioned as work and as leisure in these experiences, thinking about the way in which Shakespeare's place within UK education influences how the plays are received. I then look at the way in which different kinds of agency and control (especially of attention) are at work in these experiences, arguing that the teacher plays a central, but often overlooked role, in determining how Shakespeare spectatorship is valued. Finally, I explore the different communities of reception at work in these broadcasts, analysing the way in which Twitter was used in conjunction with in-person experiences. Ultimately I argue that the school represents a distinct site of Shakespeare broadcast reception, with potentially large implications for determining the ways in which the audiences of the future engage with, and value, Shakespeare in performance.

Chapter 3 – 'Online Encounters' – moves from the specific, physical, sites of the cinema and the school to explore the reception of online Shakespeare streams. Online streaming offers an alternative for companies who want to digitally distribute their work, but either do not have access to the funds or networks to broadcast to cinemas or want to provide free access for audiences. Companies including Cheek by Jowl, Forced Entertainment, Shakespeare's Globe and Talawa Theatre Company

have all experimented with streaming their Shakespeare productions online via YouTube or other streaming services such as Facebook Live. Unlike an audience in a specific cinema or school, audiences of online streams do not constitute a defined group of people in a single space and time. Instead, audiences are able to watch wherever they can connect to the internet on a digital device, and, if enabled by the streaming theatre company, can watch on catch-up whenever they want.

This creates challenges for researching the audiences of such broadcasts. Audiences who are not physically present are difficult to locate, contact, and engage in research, and it is even more difficult to get a sense of how and where they are watching. To overcome these challenges I conducted an online survey, publicised on social media, which asked participants about their experiences with watching Shakespeare performance online, and then undertook one-to-one interviews, conducted over email or instant messenger, with respondents who indicated that they would like to participate in further research. In this final chapter, I outline the development of online broadcasting before drawing on the results of the surveys and interviews to explore online reception. I structure the discussion around the ways in which these audiences negotiated time and space as part of their experiences, arguing that these audiences are active agents in negotiating how they value both Shakespeare and theatrical modes of participation. These online encounters challenge ideas about what counts as a theatrical experience, as well as what co-presence and community mean.

All methodologies have limitations; the samples I draw on tend to be small and consist mostly of self-selecting participants, and so the responses do not represent generalisable or statistically significant data that might tell us about the typical behaviour of broadcast audiences. This does not mean, however, that the

audience research undertaken is not useful, interesting or important. It is not my intention in the following chapters to describe the broadcast audience as a whole; instead, each instance of audience research provides the starting point for an exploration of reception within that context, functioning as an illustrative case study that begins to build a fuller picture of broadcast reception. It is often the case that one or two responses or comments are enough to begin to question a widely held belief or argument about theatrical spectatorship that is based on production or institutional analysis.

By drawing on audience research at the point of reception and integrating the voices of audiences with other forms of analysis, this thesis aims to capture and explore the complexity, specificity and richness of these encounters, offering an original contribution to the developing body of work on the digital distribution of theatre. The focus on Shakespeare means that it specifically contributes to the section of this work that is interested in Shakespeare broadcasts, widening its scope from a focus on the cinema to other sites of reception, as well as to work interested in how Shakespeare's value is reproduced and circulated via performance. However, much of the research and many of the findings discussed in what follows could be applicable to non-Shakespearean broadcast reception, and as such this thesis also hopes to offer questions and insights to inform future research on theatre spectatorship more generally.

As audiences access theatre through media more regularly, we can no longer base our understandings about the spectatorship or reception of a production on the assumption that audiences experienced that production in the same, or even similar, reception contexts. In this new theatrical ecology, audience research becomes an increasingly important tool for understanding the reception and impact of theatre.

This thesis attempts to provide an example of some of the possible ways that we might conceptualise, approach and understand remote theatre audiences through audience research. I hope to demonstrate that incorporating the voices of audiences into the academic discourse surrounding broadcasts not only enriches the way we analyse and understand broadcast experiences, but challenges us to expand our definitions of what ‘counts’ as an experience of theatre.

Chapter 1 - Encountering Shakespeare in the Cinema: Audiences at Screening Venues

The cinema represents a key site in both the history and current reception of filmed Shakespeare performance. When, in 2009, major UK theatrical institutions began filming and distributing Shakespearean theatre productions – a practice that, as Susanne Greenhalgh notes, had been subject to a forty-year hiatus – it was the cinema, rather than television or the internet, that they turned to as their 'new digital outlet' of choice (2018: 29). Following the lead of New York Metropolitan Opera's 'Met Live in HD' programme, which started broadcasting to cinemas in 2006, NT Live broadcast its first Shakespeare production, *All's Well That Ends Well*, live from the Olivier Stage to cinemas in October 2009. The cinema was also the outlet of choice for Shakespeare's Globe, who started distributing recordings of the previous season's productions to cinemas in February 2010, as well as for the RSC, who began their cinema broadcast programme with *Richard II* in November 2013. The recent rise of theatre broadcasting, then, is characterised by a turn to the cinema as a way of distributing performance work to an expanded audience, becoming a space for encountering not only film, but theatre, popular music concerts and other shared performance events.

The centrality of the cinema to the digital distribution of the arts is evident in the term 'event cinema', now widely used within the cinema industry to refer to this type of content. Whilst there remains no agreed umbrella term for digitally distributed live events, the phrase 'event cinema' positions cinema, as a place of reception and an industry, as key to the development, distribution and consumption of this kind of

content.[10] Susan Bennett proposes that whilst projects such as NT Live have been enabled by the widespread investment of HD projectors and satellite receiving equipment in cinemas, the rise of premium content has also been reciprocally beneficial for cinemas. She writes that a market for event cinema was created not simply because of what this new equipment could deliver, but also because it was required in order to produce a return on investment', suggesting that for cinemas, event cinema emerged 'as a new revenue stream at exactly the time one was needed' (2018: 43).

As well as providing a premium product to recoup the outlay spent on new technology, event cinema screenings also represent other economic opportunities for screening venues including, as Bennett points out, allowing venues to 'operate at profit on off-peak evenings'; providing advance bookings that help with cash flow; and generating increased sales of concessions (2018: 44). Cinema broadcasts are also mutually beneficial for theatres and screening venues in terms of audience reach. Cinemas offer theatres an existing distribution infrastructure, including access to a network of audiences who are already connected to venues through previous contact or local marketing. Venues have a financial stake in attracting audiences to screenings and so undertake their own marketing efforts, keeping costs down for the theatre companies. These networks are different to the theatres' own audience networks (although they may overlap) and so represent the potential of fulfilling the

[10] The first industry body for producers, distributors and exhibitors of the form, the Event Cinema Association, uses this term. Debates about terminology have been a significant feature of the critical discussion around theatre broadcasts. Here I use 'theatre broadcasts' or 'digitally distributed theatre' when referring to productions that have been distributed remotely in general terms, but use 'cinema broadcast' and 'event cinema' to describe broadcasts specifically encountered in cinemas or screening venues.

broad aim of reaching new audiences. Equally, for screening venues, event cinema represents an opportunity to attract an audience who may not frequently attend mainstream programming, and are happy to pay a premium for quality experiences.

As well as offering access to a wide and expanded audience through a ready-made network, cinema distribution represents other benefits for producing theatres. Especially in the early and experimental stages of theatre broadcasting, initiatives such as NT Live were particularly anxious to underscore the ways in which the broadcast experience sought to retain elements of the theatrical experience. Former head of NT Live, David Sabel, wrote in a 2011 report reflecting on the NT Live pilot season that, facing a 'great deal of scepticism about the nature of recorded performance' from within the theatre industry, NT Live initially

> saw cinema broadcasts as an alternative experience, aware that you can never replace the unique experience of being in the actual theatre. However we felt that we could potentially offer a top quality 'second-class' experience that would greatly increase the opportunity for people to see a National Theatre production, especially those outside London.
>
> (NESTA, 2011: 8)

Sabel goes on to explain that NT Live has become more confident in seeing the cinema broadcast not as a second-class, but as a different experience, suggesting that whilst watching a broadcast 'is not the same as being in the theatre and never could be' that it can 'honour the integrity of the work and have a significant connection with audiences' (2011: 9). Both the idea that the cinema broadcast experience might constitute the 'next-best' thing to theatre, and that it is able to honour the 'integrity' of the theatrical experience are rooted in the perceived similarities between cinematic and theatrical reception. For NT Live, the communal

and social aspects of converging at a cinema to watch together make it a suitable venue for encountering and watching theatre.

Sabel's ideas about the 'suitability' of the cinema as a site for watching theatre are based partially on NESTA's 2010 *Beyond Live* report, which details the results of audience research in cinemas and theatres at the first NT Live broadcast. The report found that the 'live and collective aspects of the theatrical experience remain essential for audiences' in cinemas, and concluded that:

> there are limits to the 'anywhere, anytime' attitude towards the consumption of content. It would seem that there does exist a 'right time' (live, as it happens) and a 'right place' (a cultural venue, whether a theatre or a cinema) to enjoy some cultural experiences
>
> (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2010: 6)

Here, it is implied that in its ability to retain some aspects of the theatrical experience – namely co-presence between audience members and a degree of 'liveness' – the cinema constitutes a 'right place' for consuming theatrical content. Cinematic and theatrical reception are grouped together, setting them against other (and, as it is implied, wrong) ways of encountering cultural content, including online streaming and DVDs, which seemingly share few of theatre's reception values. As one of the only theatre broadcasters to not also make DVDs or online downloads of their productions available, NT Live demonstrates a particular commitment to these values, stating in the FAQ section of their website that they only offer screenings in venues for a limited time frame because they are 'passionate about preserving the

live, communal experience and the sense of event through these big screen exhibitions' (National Theatre, 2017).[11]

Cinema allows theatres such as the NT to tap into existing media distribution networks, infrastructure and communities to reach a more geographically and potentially more demographically diverse audience, without sacrificing their stated commitment to the theatrical values of liveness and communality. Reception in cinemas is perceived to be similar enough to that of the theatre in order to affirm the value of watching theatre communally, but is different enough that it does not undermine, or constitute a serious threat to, the desire of audiences to attend live theatre. For NT Live and other large producers, the cinema offers a way of 'preserving' a theatre production, not only in replicating theatrical experience, but also in helping to retain control over how recordings are shared and used. As well as maintaining a commitment to 'theatrical values', the decision by NT Live to distribute exclusively to cinemas and screening venues is also motivated by the complicated rights agreements that would need to be re-negotiated for DVD or online distribution. The fact that cinema distribution offers much tighter control over content means there is less chance of material being illegally distributed.

The cultural status of cinema also plays a role in the perception that theatre broadcasts 'democratise' theatre. As a mode of distribution more regularly associated with popular culture such as mainstream film, offering theatre at the cinema is seen as a way of lowering the barrier of entry to cultural products. Michael D. Friedman suggests that 'cinemacasts' of Shakespeare represent an attempt by

[11] As I discuss in the Conclusion, NT Live has recently announced plans to make a significant number of past productions available to schools, libraries and universities via two online platforms, a move that seemingly contradicts this commitment (See Snow, 2019).

companies such as NT Live to 'claim a share of the expanded global market for Shakespeare in performance' by 'bringing a virtual experience of high-culture stage performances to pop-culture sites' (Friedman, 2016: 458). For Friedman, Shakespeare broadcasts 'contribute to the blurring of boundaries between high- and lowbrow entertainment', and as noted in the introduction, he argues that 'as such broadcasts become more popular and commonplace, the consumption of Shakespeare in performance will seem less like an elite activity' (458; 480).

The idea that attending the cinema necessarily constitutes a 'lowbrow' and therefore more accessible mode of reception, resulting in the dissolution of the association between Shakespeare performance and high culture, is complicated by the diversity of screening venues which now host theatre broadcasts. A decade on from its launch, NT Live regularly broadcasts to over 2500 venues across 60 countries, including 680 screens in the UK alone (National Theatre, 2017). These venues include multiplex, art house, and independent cinemas, but they also extend beyond 'cinema' and into arts centres, community venues and theatres. Whilst multiplex cinemas might still be generally associated with popular culture and mainstream programming, many of these venues run expansive programmes focused on the arts and independent film, as well as many being centres for live performance. A number of them explicitly position themselves as providing premium and exclusive screen experiences, going against the idea that cinemagoing is necessarily a lowbrow (or even widely affordable) activity. Moreover, many of these venues now run a regular programme of event cinema screenings, dominated by large-scale producers including RSC Live, the Met Opera, Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera House, as well as NT Live, functioning as cultural hubs where audiences encounter a range of live performance (albeit mostly from prestigious,

mainstream, UK-based producers). Rather than being demoted or levelled by distribution to cinemas, in this context, the 'high' cultural value of Shakespearean performance works to elevate the cultural status of the screening venues themselves.

The assumption that cinemas and screening venues might broadly replicate or preserve the conditions of theatrical spectatorship relies on the idea that screen spectatorship of theatre broadcasts occurs in venues that resemble the theatre, and that such spectatorship is similar across all receiving venues. The idea that cinema broadcast reception is generally the same across venues has also filtered into academic and industry research into theatre broadcasts, which, whilst sometimes focusing on audience experience, has rarely examined the roles that these diverse screening venues play in the reception process.[12] In this chapter I take screening venues and their impact on audience experience as my research focus, arguing that venues play a central and significant role in how audiences encounter and value Shakespeare performance through broadcasts. The chapter begins by surveying how critical literature and industry reports have approached, researched and positioned broadcast audience experiences, before turning to consider the results of audience research conducted at screenings of NT Live's *Macbeth* (2018) at two UK venues. This research demonstrates that screening venues significantly influence how audiences both value and experience cinema broadcasts. In the discussion, I explore the key elements that emerged as central to this influence, firstly looking at how localness, ideas about performance, and attitudes to Shakespeare altered how audiences approached and valued their experiences. I then turn to examine how the

[12] A notable exception to this is Keir Elam (2018), discussed in detail below.

venues shaped modes of participation, focusing on the way in which audiences negotiated media hybridity and experienced connection and community during broadcasts.

I argue that the screening venues in which audiences encounter Shakespeare broadcasts are not static spaces, inscribed with fixed cultural values, but are dynamic and varied elements within the system of mediated theatrical distribution. They act as cultural intermediaries which shape the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts by audiences and are spaces in which ideas about the cultural value of theatre and Shakespeare, and especially ideas about how such content should be consumed, are formed and reformed.

Shakespeare Cinema Broadcasts and the Audience 2009-2018: Issues and Debates

Industry Research and Reports

As mentioned by David Sabel in the quotation above, the move by the National Theatre to launch NT Live and begin broadcasting theatre to cinemas was met with scepticism by many in the UK theatre industry. Critics such as Chris Goode, for example, accused the NT of treating theatre as 'streamable content', sacrificing the face-to-face encounter for the chance to make money (Goode, 2010).[13] Perhaps pre-empting this negative reaction, the NT were keen to position NT Live as an experiment rather than a commercial decision and commissioned innovation foundation NESTA to undertake research into the pilot season, the results of which

[13] Goode's criticisms are discussed in Wardle (2014) and Friedman (2016).

were published as *Beyond Live* in 2010. Indeed, research, and audience research in particular, has been central to the development and marketing of cinema broadcasting since 2009. In his 2013 book, Martin Barker remarks upon the 'sheer quantity' of research into live theatre broadcasting that had emerged over the course of just four years. He notes that this research, commissioned by industry stakeholders and public funding bodies such as Arts Council England (ACE) was part of 'a general rise in research designed to evaluate the economic and cultural benefits of the arts', with the commercial and political motivations of these early reports limiting what they are able to tell us about the live broadcast audience and their experiences (2013: 26). Listing a number of missed opportunities in NESTA's *Beyond Live* report, Barker accuses the report's authors of 'not exploring the data in any depth' and only undertaking the research in order to garner 'beneficial boosterist headlines' (26).

The 'boosterist headline' of *Beyond Live* – that 'digital innovation was enabling the National Theatre to reach new audiences' – demonstrates the overriding focus in these reports on the kind of people attending theatre broadcasts (Barker, 2013: 26). That 'reaching new audiences' functions as a key marker of value in industry reports into theatre broadcasting reflects the pressure on publicly funded cultural organisations to widen access to their work. Such pressure was intensified by findings, published in a 2015 report into cultural participation, that between 2012 and 2015 'the wealthiest, better educated and least ethnically diverse 8% of the [British] population' accounted for 'at least 28% of live attendance to theatre, thus benefiting from an estimated £85 per head of Arts Council funding to theatre' (Neelands *et al*., 2015: 33). The same report mentions digital distribution as a potential way of reaching greater and more diverse audiences and a number of subsequent reports

into the impact of cinema broadcasts have sought to determine if this is the case in practice. Interestingly, these reports have tended to challenge NESTA's initial findings that digital innovation and broadcasts are effective at reaching 'new' audiences. For example, in a 2014 report commissioned by the English Touring Opera, Karen Wise found that audiences for opera cinema were mostly frequent attendees of live opera. Similarly, Mitra Abrahams and Fiona Tuck's 2015 review of existing data on the impact of event cinema found that event cinema audiences were likely to be those already heavily engaged in arts and culture, and that furthermore, they were more likely to live in a city and in London or the surrounding areas than those not engaged in event cinema.

The idea that event cinema attracts new audiences to theatre is further challenged by the results of a later report into the impact of what they describe as 'Live-to-Digital' theatre distribution, undertaken by AEA Consulting and commissioned by Arts Council England, UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre (Reidy *et al.,* 2016). The report, which was published in 2016, focused on online streaming of theatre as well as event cinema, surveying audiences of both forms of distribution. The authors found that while 'streaming correlates with decreasing household income [...] the opposite is true of event cinema', contradicting the findings in NESTA's earlier report that event cinema attracts audiences with lower incomes. Moreover, the report found that streamers were younger and more diverse than both theatre *and* cinema audiences, indicating that whilst online distribution may have the potential to widen access to theatre, the cinema might not be a particularly effective venue for reaching new or more diverse audiences.

The limitations of screening venues as a way of engaging new audiences are also explored in an action research report by The Audience Agency, Arts Council

England, and NESTA into Cinegi Arts&Film, a trial project that made filmed arts content such as NT Live recordings available to small, non-traditional screening venues via an online platform (Mitchell *et al.*, 2018). Audience research found that those who did attend screenings tended to be older than average, predominantly white, and mostly retirees. Audiences were also already highly engaged with the arts, suggesting that even for a project designed to increase outreach beyond cinemas, the effectiveness of screening venues as a site for engaging new audiences in the arts may be limited. The most recent major report into live-to-digital work, commissioned by ACE and undertaken by MTM Consulting in 2018, similarly concedes that the ability of digital distribution to reach new audiences is limited, with audiences demographically similar to those attending 'real life' arts and culture (MTM, 2018). Offering a positive slant, the report does note that live-to-digital has benefits in increasing the frequency of arts and culture consumption by existing audiences, and in introducing those audiences to different art forms.

Alongside their interest in the potential of digital distribution for reaching new audiences, these industry-led reports also share a parallel concern in understanding how broadcasts might be impacting live theatre attendance. NESTA's 2010 report concludes that their survey findings 'do not paint a picture of live cinema screenings competing with theatrical performances, but rather one where they function in parallel' (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2010: 6). In a 2014 working paper following up on this, Hasan Bakhshi and Andrew Whitby set out the results of their research into the impact of broadcasting on audiences for live theatre, which examined over 16 million ticket transactions from 54 venues from 2009 and 2013 alongside attendance data from NT Live. The paper concludes that live broadcasts generated greater, not fewer, audiences at the National Theatre, and that NT Live is also likely to have

boosted local theatre attendance (Bakhshi and Whitby, 2014). Abrahams and Tuck agree that there is no evidence to suggest that theatre or film audiences are being displaced by broadcasts, and AEA's *Live-to-Digital* report also concludes that their data reveals minimal impact on live attendance, with theatregoers 'neither more or less likely to attend live theatre if they experience it digitally', and with those who stream slightly more likely to attend more frequently than the average theatregoer (Reidy *et al.*, 2016: 10). MTM's 2018 report corroborates these results, concluding that audiences see live-to-digital as a valuable replication of, but not a replacement for, live encounters with arts and culture (MTM, 2018: 8).

As a body of research, these reports conceive of theatre broadcasts and their audiences in two major ways: digital distribution offers the opportunity to reach new audiences, but also represents a potential threat to live attendance and existing modes of encountering theatre. The audience research conducted for these reports seeks to investigate both of these possibilities in order to provide stakeholders with data on which to base decisions about how to proceed with digital distribution, quelling fears about audience cannibalisation, but questioning the effectiveness of broadcasting, particularly to screening venues, for expanding the diversity of theatre audiences.

As Barker points out in relation to *Beyond Live*, the necessarily commercial focus of these reports means that they are limited in what they can tell us about audience experience in and of itself (2013: 26). Although three of the reports (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2010; Reidy *et al.*, 2016; MTM, 2018) do include experiential questions as part of their audience surveys, these questions are asked in the service of answering their main research questions, with audience responses turned into commercially useful information. For *Beyond Live,* for example, NESTA questioned

cinema and theatre audiences about their expectations of broadcasts, comparing this to how they felt after the event. They concluded that 'despite lower expectations, cinema audiences reported higher levels of emotional engagement with the production than those who had experienced the play at the National Theatre' (Bakhshi *et al.,*2010: 5). As discussed above, the report uses this evidence of high emotional engagement, alongside responses from audiences indicating that liveness and collective experience was important, to argue for the value of live broadcasting to audiences, whilst carefully distinguishing the form from other (non-live, non-collective) media experiences. AEA's *From Live-to-Digital* (2016) and MTM's *Live-to-Digital in the Arts* (2018) also take comparative approaches to audience experience in order to determine differences between 'real-life' and digital encounters with art and performance, driven by an underlying concern that audiences might find digital experiences more engaging. Both reports conclude that audiences do not believe that live-to-digital is a substitute for theatre, but interestingly contradict *Beyond Live*'s conclusions in relation to 'liveness', finding that audiences did not consider whether or not a production was streamed live important to their experiences.[14] Questions about experience are therefore asked in order to determine whether or not live-to-digital represents a threat to live theatre in order to reassure stakeholders, rather than to interrogate why audiences might be responding in a certain way.

Academic Research and the Broadcast Audience

Although drawing on the results of these reports and sharing some of their key concerns, academic research has approached theatre broadcasts and audience

[14] These findings are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

experience with different research priorities. The resurgence of theatre broadcasting began to draw academic attention in 2008 as a result of the Met Opera broadcasts, and the body of critical work has steadily grown as the form itself has developed. Broadcasts have attracted interest from a range of academic fields including theatre, performance, and media studies, as well as adaptation, popular culture, digital media, opera, dance, and music studies. Driven by the high percentage of Shakespeare plays that have been broadcast, a large proportion of the academic research on theatre broadcasts has come from scholars who focus on Shakespeare in performance (a body of literature that this thesis directly contributes to). Aside from a few exceptions (notably Barker, 2013 and Abbott and Read, 2017), academic work on theatre broadcasts has generally not conducted its own audience research. Despite this, audience experience has been a key focus of critical discussion. Below, I discuss how the audience and their experiences have been considered in academic work on cinema broadcasts across three focus points: media hybridity, interval features, and liveness.[15]

Media Hybridity and Audience Agency

Mirroring industry research, early academic work on theatre broadcasts focused on comparing the experiences of audiences in cinemas to those of audiences in the theatre. In seeking to provide access to the original 'live' experience, rather than to an archival recording or filmed reconstruction of a past production, broadcasts appeared to constitute a new kind of experience. In an article about opera cinema

[15] Because work focused on Shakespeare broadcasts figures as such a large proportion of the literature, the survey is not restricted to work focused on Shakespeare, but is restricted to work that considers broadcasts to screening venues in particular, rather than online streaming or to schools, both of which are discussed in later chapters.

that predates the launch of other projects such as NT Live, media scholar Paul Heyer applies a medium theory framework to explore what makes what he describes as ‘Digital Broadcast Cinema’ physically, psychologically, and socially different from other media. Heyer argues that such broadcasts are not films, but that they represent a hybrid of cinematic, televisual and theatrical conventions, resulting in an experience that combines ‘the shared experiences of traditional movie-going with at least part of the ‘aura’ of attending a live theatrical performance’ (Heyer, 2008: 602). In attempting to understand what kind of art form broadcasts constitute, Heyer reaches back into media history for precedents of opera broadcast in other formats, a methodology that is also applied by John Wyver in his exploration of theatre to television adaptations of Shakespeare. Wyver uses this historical survey to position recent cinema broadcasts of Shakespeare productions as a new development in an existing matrix of relationships between theatre, Shakespeare, television, and cinema that dates back to the emergence of screen media (Wyver, 2014a).

This work challenges the narrative that cinema broadcasts are necessarily a ‘new’ kind of media experience, demonstrating how they are rooted in a range of historical media conventions which combine to create a hybrid medium. Although much of this earlier work on broadcasts is focused on questions of what broadcasts ‘are’, audiences are not absent from these critical debates. Conclusions about the relationships between theatre and cinema, and about the ontology of broadcasts, are often based on what kind of experiences they are perceived to be enabling. These conclusions are often based on comparisons between theatre and cinema experiences and generally fall into three schools of thought: that broadcasts are a secondary or lesser experience to theatre, that broadcasts constitute adaptations of

theatrical productions and are experienced as such, and that broadcasts are a new media genre, with the potential to add to or even improve the theatrical experience.

John Wyver observes that the early discourse used to describe cinema broadcasts from those within theatre was 'one centered on loss' (Wyver, 2014a: 117). He writes that 'the loss of liveness [...] the loss of co-presence of audiences and actors, and the loss of reciprocal effect of spectators and cast' have all been perceived as negative aspects of the screen experience (117). The idea that cinema broadcasts are secondary to theatre has influenced how some academics have approached and discussed broadcast experiences. Of particular concern has been the way that broadcasts determine where screen audiences are able to look, representing a 'supposed loss in a screen adaptation of a staging of the audience member's autonomy of gaze' (Wyver, 2014a: 118). In their exploration of what changes in the live relay process, Bernadette Cochrane and Frances Bonner go so far as to argue that cinema audiences give up their 'rights of reception' to the camera director, who denies them, through the editing of camera angles and close-ups, the ability 'to select and compile his or her own edit of the proceedings' (Cochrane and Bonner, 2014: 127). In their eagerness to disprove the stated similarity between theatre and broadcast experiences, Cochrane and Bonner lapse into value judgements about theatre and cinematic spectatorship. They valorise the 'active' and individualistic experience of live theatre and describe the ability to choose where to look as 'the primary virtue of live experience' (127). In comparison, cinema audiences are characterised as passive and lacking agency; they are 'deprived', 'denied', and are even 'misguided' and 'compliant' in the way that they articulate their experiences of 'liveness' in the cinema.

There is little consideration here of the ways in which, as John Wyver notes, 'stagings direct an audience member's attention just as much as [..] the shot changes of a screen version' or indeed of the different, and potentially increased, forms of agency that cinema audiences might experience as part of their viewing experiences (2014a: 118). Rather, the analysis of the experience of audiences in the cinema falls back on assumptions about cinematic spectatorship. Although much of the literature around broadcasts challenges and interrogates such assumptions, blanket ideas about screen audiences' agency do persist. In his 2015 article, for example, Daniel Schulze claims that cinema broadcast audiences 'are condemned to absolute passivity [...] deprived of their freedom of gaze' by camerawork that 'robs the viewer of their aesthetic choice and personal contemplation' (Schulze, 2015: 318).

For other critics wrestling with the question of how to define cinema broadcasts as a media genre, the conclusion that they are a type of hybrid screen adaptation has more positive outcomes for audiences. Discussing the different iterations of the National Theatre's *Frankenstein* (2011), Lynette Porter argues that the cinema broadcasts of the play constitute a hybrid media form that 'requires new consideration of the definition of *adaptation*' (Porter, 2013: 17). Porter considers the limitations this hybridisation has on replicating the theatrical experience, noting a number of moments where screen audiences missed out on certain aspects of the production. However, Porter contextualises the impact of this, writing that the issues raised by industry professionals about the 'loss' of the live experience 'usually do not trouble audiences who, if not for NT Live, would not be able to see a performance' (11). Cinema audiences might have less visual agency than theatre audiences, but, as Porter points out, this comparison is meaningless to audiences who otherwise

would not be seeing the production at all. In this sense, these audiences have *more* agency in relation to these productions because of NT Live rather than less. Porter herself explains how, unable to travel to London from Florida, the NT Live broadcasts of the play enabled her not only to experience the production, but 'to share a love of theater with a like-minded audience' and to incorporate the production into her teaching and research (12).

Appearing in the same edition of *Adaptation* journal as Cochrane and Bonner, both John Wyver and Janice Wardle also counter the idea that the technical mediation of theatre must necessarily result in a lesser or diminished experience for audiences. Rather than taking away from the experience, Wardle suggests that mediation represents 'opportunities for additions' including 'enhancements, developing shots and reflections, all created by the director and film production company' (Wardle, 2014: 142). Using close analysis of scenes from NT Live's *King Lear* (2014) and of RSC Live's *Richard II* (2013), Wardle demonstrates how film grammar can highlight different thematic and emotional emphases. Wyver also argues that the creative decisions and production processes involved in mediating a theatre production mean that cinema audiences are witness to 'distinct creative achievements' (Wyver, 2014a: 118). The differences created by mediation, which Cochrane and Bonner view as robbing audiences of their rights of reception, are here positioned as opportunities for cinema audiences to participate in new and distinct experiences.

Wyver argues that to be understood as such, broadcasts must be seen as more than just 'unmediated documentation' by those who promote, write about, and view them (118). His call for closer scrutiny of the broadcasts as creative achievements has been answered by a number of scholars who, following Wardle,

have turned to close filmic analysis of (mainly Shakespearean) broadcasts as a way of highlighting and demystifying the creative processes and labour required to translate a theatre production for screen reception. Wyver begins to address this himself in a 2015 article drawing on his personal experience as producer of the RSC Live broadcasts to detail how the first RSC broadcasts were created and produced (Wyver, 2015). The 'material conditions of production' have been further explored by Alison Stone, who details the mechanics of an RSC Live broadcast in order to counter the 'myth of non-mediation' surrounding the presentation of cinema broadcasts (2016: 632). Stone employs information about production processes to make further arguments about the reception of broadcasts. Using examples of film grammar from two productions, she argues that the filming process 'both disrupts and intensifies audience experience' and, considering NESTA's audience research (2010), she suggests that high audience engagement in cinemas is 'witness to the power of film grammar to make broadcasts more engaging' (637).

The use of close filmic analysis as a way of attempting to understand audience experience is further developed in two later articles on Shakespeare broadcasting by Michael D. Friedman (2016) and Erin Sullivan (2017). As noted above, Friedman argues that cinema broadcasts constitute 'their own emerging genre of Shakespeare in performance' and that consequently, they should be 'evaluated according to their own developing conventions' (Friedman, 2016: 457-8). He focuses on the NT Live broadcast of *Coriolanus* (2014), combining close analysis of film grammar and interviews with the stage and screen directors in order to explore the role of the screen director in enhancing the experience of cinema audiences. Friedman's article is primarily concerned with the aesthetics of broadcasting; the experience of the audience in the cinema figures as a measure of

how successful a screen director has been at translating the production to screen. The audience features more prominently in the work of Sullivan who is also interested in 'making visible' the 'complex forms of artistry' at work in the creation of Shakespeare broadcasts (Sullivan, 2017: 629). Sullivan's explicit intention in closely considering the film grammar across a range of Shakespeare transmissions is to explore 'the impact these aesthetic decisions have on an audience's viewing experience' and to consider what this might mean for 'our evolving understanding of theatrical spectatorship', ultimately arguing that such mediation has the potential to enhance experiences for cinema audiences (629).

Both Friedman and Sullivan make highly effective arguments for seeing theatre broadcasts as a specific genre, for acknowledging the creative labour involved in their creation, and for carefully considering their artistic achievements. Both articles advance discussions around theatre broadcast experiences beyond a comparison of similarity and difference and offer ways of conceptualising the cinema audience that do not centre around loss and deprivation, instead considering the possibility that theatre broadcasts might 'offer their own distinct advantages and pleasures' (Sullivan, 2017: 634). In this, they begin to reinscribe agency into cinema audiences' encounters with Shakespeare performance, exploring how watching and piecing together stage space on screen can be an active, rather than inherently passive, process. However, extrapolating audience experience from an analysis of content is limited in what it can tell us about audience response. Grounded in evidence from the 'text' of the broadcasts, Friedman's and Sullivan's analysis of cinema spectatorship provides insight into how audiences *might* respond, revealing more about how screen directors envisage and attempt to shape audience response, than about actual audience experience in cinemas. Acknowledging the limits of her

work in this respect, Sullivan concludes by noting that whilst '[s]ome audience members will no doubt prefer different views and techniques above others' that 'one important point can be generalized: broadcasts offer audiences artful, varied, engrossing, and effective ways of seeing theater' (655). The key word here is 'offer'; what actually happens depends not only on personal preference but on a range of factors including levels of knowledge and experience and the material conditions of reception.

The limitations of close analysis alone as a way of describing the cinema broadcast experience are reflected in the different approaches taken by the contributors to Pascale Aebischer, Laurie E. Osborne and Susanne Greenhalgh's edited collection *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience* (2018). Just five of the fifteen essays use sustained analyses of film grammar as a primary methodology. Moving beyond the need to illuminate production processes or prove that broadcast aesthetics are worthy of critical attention, these essays employ close reading as a way of exploring a specific element of the broadcasts, such as how a sense of space is constructed (Aebischer, 2018) or to compare how two different edits of the same broadcast frame a production differently (Kirwan, 2018). M. J. Kidnie's essay reflects usefully on the implications of using archival recordings to analyse broadcasts, suggesting that analysing film grammar risks 'los[ing] sight of some cinema spectators' inclusive experience of the performance specifically as live theatre' (2018: 142). To analyse recordings as 'adaptations' of the live performance, she writes, 'seems to miss something important about the context of reception that was at one time defining of the experience' (142).

Elsewhere in the collection, Ann M. Martinez attempts to capture and explore the importance of these contexts by considering the experiences of her

undergraduate students at a cinema broadcast of NT Live's *Hamlet* (2015). Incorporating close analysis of camera shots alongside student responses, Martinez demonstrates how reactions to shot composition can be dependent on an audience member's expectations and their prior experiences of live theatre. She contrasts the experience of a student interested in theatre design, who reported feeling a sense of frustration at not being able to look where she wanted, to that of a student interested in Cumberbatch's acting, who found that the camera's focus on the actor meant that 'she got to see everything she wanted to see' (Martinez, 2018: 202-203). Even this consideration of just two opposing responses counters ideas about 'passive' cinema audiences and problematizes the idea that we can accurately understand audience response based on an analysis of camerawork. These students' experiences of *Hamlet* were not simply determined by the construction of the play on screen, but were contingent on the conditions of reception and their own personal interests and needs.

Martinez also describes how, watching in the cinema, her students experienced a strong sense of participating as a 'community of reception'. She attributes part of this feeling to the 'viewpoint of the performance that they shared', arguing that the broadcast 'ultimately eliminates the single vantage point (based on seat location) and establishes a communal view' (201). For Martinez, this 'communal view' creates a 'fluid digital stage' that offers the cinema audience 'an almost omniscient view', democratising the model of live theatrical spectatorship in which the 'best view' is often only available to those with the means to pay for it (202). Unlike earlier commentators such as Cochrane and Bonner, for whom the removal of individual agency by mediation irredeemably and detrimentally alters the live experience, Martinez articulates an alternative model of value that prizes the shared

communal experience created *by* the mediating lens of the camera. Such a suggestion reminds us that the 'rights of reception' that Cochrane and Bonner describe as so vital to spectatorship in the theatre are rarely evenly distributed throughout the audience. In the theatre, the ability to look where you want is not a neutral or universal aspect of live spectatorship. Martinez argues that the single 'omniscient' viewpoint provided by the camera in a broadcast not only brings remote audiences together, flattening out hierarchies of spectatorship – among cinema audiences at least – but that it also offers cinema audiences something extra, giving them a way of seeing theatre that is unfettered by the traditionally static spatial relationships between audience and actor in live performance.

Whilst the cinema audience tended to be perceived as losing out in early discussions of cinema broadcasts, more recent work, especially work that considers actual audience experience, has begun to explore how cinema broadcasts offer exciting new ways of seeing and experiencing Shakespeare in performance and theatre more generally.[16] Cinema broadcasts, these discussions suggest, might be spaces where audiences have the agency to create and shape their own theatrical experiences, functioning as sites of emerging spectatorship practices, which in turn question long-held ideas about co-presence, liveness, and what it means to experience theatre.

[16] As well as Martinez (2018), this includes Sullivan's work in the same collection which considers audience use of Twitter during a cinema and online broadcast.

Interval Features and Audience Agency

As well as focusing on camera direction, discussions around audience agency in cinema broadcasts have centred on the additional features that introduce the main production and are shown during the interval. These features include live segments fronted by a presenter as well as pre-recorded features and talking heads with cast members, creatives, and other experts. These features usually remain in encore screenings of productions and are now an established feature of cinema broadcast reception. A clear departure from the experience of the theatre audience, to whom these features are not available, these paratextual elements have elicited mixed responses from both audiences and critics. Negative responses have often focused on the conversational form and content of the intervals, the tone of which some critics have seen as inappropriate for 'serious' cultural viewing. In her discussion of opera cinema, for example, Adele Anderson dismissively describes interval interviews as 'backstage banalities reminiscent of a halftime sport event', a sentiment echoed in Ryan Gilbey's review of NT Live's *Coriolanus* (2014) in which he implored producers to 'cut the chat and get on with the show' (Anderson, 2012: 190; Gilbey, 2014).

Four of the six broadcast reviews that appear in the special broadcast reviews section of *Shakespeare Bulletin* (Greenhalgh, 2014) comment, all in broadly negative terms, on the paratextual materials and their impact on the viewing experience. Olwen Terris' review of *Macbeth* (2013) takes a particularly strong stance, stating that Emma Freud 'importuning the cinema audience into wonderment at the spectacle we were about to share (and, we were told, would certainly enjoy) was unnecessary' (Terris, 2014: 267). Beyond being 'unnecessary', Stephen Purcell notes that a documentary film played before *King Lear* (2011) 'tantalized us with

what we were missing, describing the smallness and intimacy of the Donmar space', implying that the features worked to further increase the cinema audiences' sense of isolation from the theatre (2014b: 264). As well as content and tone, others take issue with what they perceive as another move to shape reception and limit the agency of cinema viewers. John Wyver writes that Emma Freud's introduction to NT Live's *Hamlet* (2011) 'sought to reassure us both about the achievement of what we are to see and its accessibility', noting that NT Live felt no comparative need to 'reassure' audiences about their broadcast of *War Horse* (Wyver, 2014b: 261). Similarly, in his review of *Coriolanus* (2014), Peter Kirwan argues that NT Live suffers from 'an anxiety over reception', writing that the audience are 'required to watch explanatory interviews and features [...] in an attempt to ensure reception is as homogenous as possible' (Kirwan, 2014a: 276). The idea that the paratexts represent an attempt to guide how viewers think about the production is further echoed by Janice Wardle, who argues that there is 'an inherent risk [...] of steering the audience to a view of the play more decisively than with a theatre programme, where the audience member has more choice whether to read before the performance, later or not at all' (Wardle, 2014: 140).

These arguments risk falling back on assumptions about the passivity of screen audiences, characterising them as less able to look away, disagree with, or simply ignore, the material surrounding a broadcast than a theatre audience. Cochrane and Bonner, for example, write that in the theatre the interval is the audience's 'own individual free time to use as they wish', but propose that this freedom is removed in a cinema broadcast, because more than half of the interval is filled with screen content (2014: 128-9). The comparison implies that cinema audiences have no choice but to watch the material presented on screen, and are

somehow less able to decide how to fill the interval than their counterparts in the theatre. Kirwan ends his review more positively by acknowledging the agency of the cinema audience, writing that 'the attempts of NT Live to impose a collective voice on its audience pleasingly fail in the face of disparate, but productively engaged, individual responses' (2014a: 278). However, none of the reviewers, and many of those who discuss interval features, consider the possibility that watching the extra material might be an active choice on the part of cinema audiences. Whilst rejecting the steering influence of the paratexts is characterised as active, deciding to watch (and even enjoy) the features is positioned as a passive and compliant position.

Some critics, however, have begun to explore what the interval features might add to cinema audience experiences. Erin Sullivan, for example, has highlighted how 'these opening materials do occasionally perform useful work [...] in terms of introducing offsite viewers to the space, place, and story of the venue' (Sullivan, 2017: 635). Although Wardle is cautious about the potential steering of reception, she also notes how the inclusion of the interval, and the interval features, can work to create a sense of community among cinema audiences and between the cinema and theatre audience (Wardle, 2014: 138). Also locating value in the way the broadcasts are able to build and foster a sense of community, Laurie E. Osborne has suggested that the incorporation of the 'communal waiting' of the interval into the broadcast 'transplants theatrical experience into this new performance field' (Osborne, 2018: 223).

There is also some evidence that these materials are generally appreciated and enjoyed by audience members. Attitudes to interval features have not been a main focus of industry research, but AEA's *Live-to-Digital* report did ask audiences what type of supplementary content they would like to see as part of Event Cinema

screenings, finding that they were most likely to say they wanted interviews with actors (62%) and directors (59%). Along with 'behind-the-scenes' tours (48%), these rated much more highly than documentary material about the play, indicating that audiences are more interested in finding out about the production and its processes than being provided with framing information about the play itself (Reidy *et al.,* 2016: 84). The lack of a 'none of the above' option on this question means it does not capture the responses of those who would prefer broadcasts to be unadorned, but the fact that a significant percentage of those asked selected at least one option implies that there is an appetite among cinema audiences for supplementary materials.

Two academic investigations have provided additional insight into how audiences respond to, and value, extra features as part of their broadcast experiences. Drawing on audience research conducted at Picturehouse Cinema screenings, Martin Barker describes how approaches to cinema broadcasts fell generally into two camps; 'expert' and 'immersive'. These positions, Barker found, played a large role in determining how an audience member viewed additional materials. He writes that

> those adopting an 'Immersive' strategy welcomed all the bonus materials, because these materials allowed them to become audiences in a way that previously they had not been able to. 'Experts' on the other hand, displayed a feeling that the event was almost being misappropriated: they see themselves as holding expertise which the livecasts undercut.
>
> (Barker, 2013: 66)

For those adopting an 'expert' position, Barker suggests, extra information can get in the way of critical distance, steering their spectatorship in a way that they might find invasive or patronising. However, for others, the same features can bring them

closer to material from which they might feel culturally isolated, giving them insider information around which they can orient and understand their experiences. Barker's study is particularly useful because it allows us to position and understand academic responses to interval features as part of this spectrum of audience responses, and to expand our focus to incorporate a much wider range of audience experiences. He reminds us that when it comes to audience response we should not 'allow prejudgments about what *ought* to happen to block our seeing what *does* happen' (2013: 70). Rather than dismissing interval features or theorising about what they do to audience reception, Barker's study seeks to understand how audiences respond to and use these aspects of broadcasts in relation to a wider approach to spectatorship.

Barker's study also highlights how ideas about the way something *should* be attended to can change how audiences ultimately experience it. The inclusion of supplementary material intervenes in a traditionally 'theatrical' mode of participation, provoking responses that reveal ingrained ideas and values about appropriate ways of watching theatre and Shakespeare in particular. The way that material outside of the 'main text' might polarise audiences of cinema broadcasts who value productions differently is a key finding of Daisy Abbott and Claire Read's study into how audiences of NT Live's *Hamlet* (2015) engaged with what they describe as the broadcast's 'paradocumentation'. Abbott and Read define 'paradocumentation' as encompassing documents that

> are produced by both official and non-official sources before, during and after a live-streamed performance; for example, the leaflets and online articles promoting the performance, programmes distributed in theatre and cinema venues for audiences, reviews from critics, and unofficial documents created by audience members.

(Abbott and Read, 2017: 165)

In order to assess how audiences engaged with this material, Abbott and Read conducted surveys across three cinemas (two in the UK, and one in Malta). They found that the two most common reasons for watching were 'to see the main actor specifically' (34%) and 'to see this play specifically' (29%), identifying 'two distinct groups of audience members with limited overlap [...] fans of *Hamlet* and fans of Cumberbatch' (183-4). They found significant differences in the way these groups engaged with 'paradocumentation', with Cumberbatch fans having 'consistently higher engagement levels in almost every category across pre-, during-, and post-broadcast activities' (184). As Abbott and Read suggest, different expectations about how to watch and document theatre 'can create tensions between audience groups' as well as between NT Live and audiences (182).

Interestingly, Abbott and Read do not ask audiences about their engagement with the interval features themselves. They state that they were particularly interested in forms of paradocumentation that were actively sought out by audiences, and because the interval features were shown as part of the core broadcast, they were assumed to have been passively consumed by all audience members (179-80). Even so, their findings about how different ways of engaging with 'paradocumentation' can cause tensions between audience groups can be seen as an extension of Barker's findings around audience responses to interval features: the supplementary aspects of cinema broadcasts enable modes of participation which provoke audiences to actively position themselves in relation to different kinds of

cultural value, experience and expertise.[17] As this work demonstrates, considering how audiences actually approach and use the material surrounding the 'main performance' of a cinema broadcast provides valuable insight into the range of ways that audiences view, and value, theatre broadcasts.

Liveness and the Audience

Interval features have also been considered in relation to the ways that they contribute to the construction of 'liveness' in cinema broadcasts, both in mimicking the conventions of live television broadcasts, and in how they insistently emphasise the live nature of the broadcast transmission. Such discussions around how cinema broadcasts reinforce and challenge traditional notions of 'liveness' are threaded throughout the industry and academic research on theatre broadcasts. The way in which remote audiences experienced a sense of 'liveness' was a key focus in NESTA's *Beyond Live* report, which found that 84.3% of cinema audiences 'felt real excitement because they knew that the performance they were watching was taking place 'live' at the National Theatre' (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2010: 6), However, the idea that 'liveness' is inherently dependent on temporal simultaneity has been challenged by the popularity of 'encore' screenings. The 2011 summary of the NT Live pilot season noted that the 'benefits of the live experience have also been observed in audiences watching time-delayed NT Live broadcasts [...] suggesting that the atmosphere of the screening and the brand are as important as the instant relay' (NESTA, 2011: 14).

[17] I explore this idea in relation to the 'paradocumentation' of NT Live's *Coriolanus* (2014) in Nicholas, 2018, pp. 83-84.

For Cochrane and Bonner, the promotion of ‘liveness’ as part of the broadcasts obscures their constructed nature and misleads cinema audiences. They dismiss NT Live’s findings about audiences at time-delayed broadcasts, asserting that cinema audiences are ‘misguided’ in their responses to liveness. Instead, they argue that the audience comments demonstrate how liveness functions as a ‘major exploitable commodity’ that is especially good at attracting (or deceiving) ‘those unfamiliar with theatre performance’ (2014: 126). Whilst Cochrane and Bonner argue that ‘liveness’ in the broadcasts, detached as it is from the time and space of the originating performance, is necessarily illusory, other critics have instead been more interested in how theatre broadcasts might be altering fundamental notions of what ‘liveness’ is. Often drawing on the arguments of Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander, these discussions consider how broadcast experiences of ‘liveness’, separate from physical or temporal co-presence, might disrupt and expand ontological definitions of ‘liveness’. Stephen Purcell, for example, is also interested in how NT Live is ‘deeply invested in constructing a sense of its own liveness’ but, rather than denying that cinema audiences can genuinely experience liveness, he argues that intermedial and digital forms of theatre ‘put pressure both on the formal boundaries of theatre and on the very concept of ‘liveness’ itself’ (2014a: 214, 221). Purcell suggests that instead of being defined in spatial and temporal terms, a new understanding of ‘digital’ liveness might define it in terms of ‘interactivity, responsiveness and an apparent multiplicity of choices’ (2014a: 222).

Purcell argues that, as well as challenging ideas about liveness through digital distribution, broadcast projects such as NT Live actually reaffirm traditional notions of liveness rooted in time and place (2014a: 213). The idea that cinema broadcasts are engaged in reinforcing the importance of ‘live’ spectatorship whilst destabilising what

exactly ‘liveness’ might mean has been further explored by Geoffrey Way. Like Purcell, Way’s focus is on how broadcasts might alter core understandings of liveness, arguing that NT Live use ‘liveness’ as a way of establishing their screenings ‘as events for their audiences akin to attending the actual theater’ (Way, 2017: 392). In Way’s formulation, ‘liveness’ is just one feature of a wider emphasis on ‘eventness’, which he describes as a ‘defining element of live Shakespearean performance’ (390). In constructing ‘eventness’, Way argues, an emphasis on ‘liveness’ is key for engaging a core audience already familiar with the conventions of live performance. He writes:

> Since audiences attending the NT Live broadcasts tend to be older and already invested in theater, the discourse of liveness around the broadcasts serves to reinforce their status as theatrical events for the audience. Liveness is thus still central to many audiences’ experiences and perceptions of the performance and its eventness, even if temporality overtakes corporeality as the defining aspect of liveness.
>
> (Way, 2017: 395)

Way suggests that whilst NT Live screenings do challenge understandings of liveness, promoting the screenings as new ways of experiencing theatre, they are also ‘heavily entrenched in aspects of liveness that audiences will recognize as inherently theatrical’ (395). This balancing act allows them to present the NT Live project as innovative but also ensures that they do not alienate a target audience who are used to traditional modes of experiencing theatre.

Cochrane and Bonner, Purcell, and Way generally position ‘liveness’ as something that is carefully constructed by NT Live in order to create an intended mode of participation in its audiences. However, in thinking about how familiarity with theatrical conventions might shape an audience member’s expectations in relation to

liveness, Way's discussion begins to acknowledge the ways in which the audience might be an active agent in determining how they experience liveness. Janice Wardle also gestures at this agency when she proposes that crafted and constructed notions of liveness are 'understood as 'live' by their audiences because they are based on models from other media such as television 'where live experiences are customarily signalled according to certain conventions', suggesting that audience familiarity with media, as well as live theatre, can alter how liveness is experienced during broadcasts (Wardle, 2014: 151). The idea that 'liveness' is as reliant on audiences as it is on the content and form of the broadcasts is developed further by Alison Stone. Pointing out that '[l]iveness has conditions of reception as well as conditions of production', Stone posits that the perception of liveness 'depends in part on what the audience knows' and on the 'shared conditions of reception' in the cinema, as well as on actual simultaneity between distribution and reception (Stone, 2016: 627, 637).

Stone quotes Adele Anderson, who, early in the development of broadcasts, wrote that 'we must pay attention to the ways in which audience reception and response co-constitute liveness as much as do the artistic and performance practices' (Anderson, 2012: 9). Much of the work that has followed (including Stone's) has tended to focus instead on how liveness is constructed by the broadcast, rather than something that is co-created between the audience, the broadcast, and the distribution method. A number of critics do explore personal experiences of 'liveness' at broadcasts, but often fail to interrogate or acknowledge their own role in the construction of those experiences. Cochrane and Bonner, for example, refer to the experience of seeing themselves on screen, writing that 'nothing contradicts [liveness] quite so graphically as seeing your own head sitting in

an audience in front of you (on the screen) watching a performance that you saw some weeks earlier on the other side of the world' (2014: 126). They use this anecdote as evidence for the illusory nature of liveness, but do not acknowledge that this particular experience – attending a broadcast filming and then watching it again on screen and seeing yourself – is a very rare one, with the resulting sense of liveness (or lack thereof) likely to be almost unique.

A number of the reviewers in the special reviews edition of *Shakespeare Bulletin* also speak of seeing productions more than once and in different ways, comparing theatre and cinema experiences, or commenting on the altered experience of watching broadcasts again in the NT archive (See Wyver, 2014b; Purcell, 2014b; and Sullivan, 2014). M.J. Kidnie explores the effects of viewing the same production multiple times across media, especially in relation to 'liveness', in her contribution to *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience* (2018). Although the collection explicitly positions itself as moving beyond debates focused on 'liveness', Kidnie returns to it, arguing that it is key to understanding audience experience. Kidnie considers the Stratford Festival of Canada HD recordings, drawing on personal experiences of watching *The Adventures of Pericles* (2015) in the theatre, in the cinema, and in the archives (Kidnie, 2018: 138). Reflecting on the cinema broadcast she writes that she 'felt the absence of live performance, perhaps because my memories of seeing it at the Stratford Festival the previous summer were still so vivid', demonstrating how an experience of liveness can be determined, or altered, by previous experiences and expectations (141). Kidnie's discussion positions liveness as something that is experienced by audiences, arising out of, and dependent on, their relationship with the production rather than something that is necessarily reliant on a set of production and distribution conditions. Although Kidnie

did not experience the cinema broadcast of *Pericles* as 'live', she does not deny that other audience members might have done, and indeed writes that she is 'reluctant to lose sight of some cinema spectators' inclusive experience of the performance specifically as live theatre' (142).

Further understanding the way that cinema audiences experience and value broadcasts as 'live' is one of the main foci of Martin Barker's investigation into broadcast audiences. Having surveyed existing debates around the notion of 'liveness' in a range of fields including performance, film, television, music, virtual performance, comedy, and sports studies, Barker goes on to explore how his survey participants at cinema broadcasts responded to being asked what 'liveness' meant to them. He found that liveness 'feeds into the thoughts and expectations of many attenders', but that audiences valued this liveness in different ways (2013: 62). From the written responses of audiences, Barker identifies five separate dimensions of liveness – immediacy, intimacy, buzz, learning and 'being (in) the audience' – experienced by audiences (67). 'Immediacy' and 'intimacy' refer to the audiences' relationship with the originating performance, with immediacy arising out of temporal simultaneity, including a sense of risk and uncertainty, and intimacy related to spatial relationships, including a sense of being close to the actors of performers. 'Buzz' defines liveness as reliant on the sense of sharing the experience with a community of reception both in cinemas and in the theatre. Perhaps less obvious elements of liveness, 'learning' and 'being (in) the audience' are related to the perceived value of participating in live cultural events, with the former describing audiences valuing the screen content for what it might teach them, and the latter referring to the way in which audiences were able to perform certain kinds of knowledge about the appropriate ways of engaging with and watching this content.

Barker writes that his respondents 'could be ambivalent, […] attracted or repelled along different dimensions', suggesting that audiences approach and appreciate elements of liveness differently depending on their previous experiences of, and attitudes towards, live theatre performance (the 'immersive' and 'expert' positions described above) (67). What is particularly evident from Barker's analysis is how 'liveness', as experienced by audiences, is in a close and complex relationship with value, and is not only determined by the conditions of production, distribution and reception. The way in which an audience member experiences a broadcast as live, therefore, is conditioned by what they might view as the 'appropriate' way of engaging with a certain performance. Barker illustrates this by exploring how audiences responded differently to the idea of distance in the broadcasts. For some audience members, 'distance was a *problem* overcome by the cinema presentation' (67), with close-ups and extra features collapsing the spaces, both geographical and cultural, between audience member and performance, providing an exciting and desirable 'experience of *privileged access*' (65). For other audience members, this collapsing of distance had a negative impact on their experience. For these audiences, liveness is about maintaining a 'critical relationship' with theatre that allows them to reflect intellectually on their experiences. As Barker points out, this results in an apparent paradox: those who are 'most committed to the importance of physical co-presence are the ones who are most likely to say that they *do not like being brought too close to the performers*' (69).

Ideas about liveness are closely bound up with attitudes and ideas about 'appropriate' ways of participating with and valuing theatre. As with responses to interval features, claims or statements about liveness are often also articulations of a set of held values about cultural value and modes of participation, and can

sometimes resemble forms of gatekeeping. Valuing an 'immersive' or emotional mode of participation, is often trivialised, as seen in attitudes to the behaviour of fans of big-name actors appearing in Shakespeare broadcasts (See Nicholas, 2018). The two ways of valuing liveness that Barker identifies – for its ability to provide privileged access, and as a way of retaining control over an experience – are not mutually exclusive, and can therefore create tensions within an audience, especially in cinemas, where more than one mode of participating is possible. Barker concludes by proposing that future research needs 'to explore directly the *rise of new manners of participation,* to see the ways in which audiences communally produce new ways of 'doing liveness'' (71). It is also possible though, that these new 'manners of participation' will conflict with each other as different ways of 'doing liveness' emerge and collide with one another.

'A different kind of cultural site': Screening venues and audience experience

The differing priorities of both academic and industry research to date – establishing the impact of broadcasting on the theatre industry and its capacity for reaching new audiences; attempting to define what broadcasts *are* and how they compare to theatre experiences; and how broadcasts disrupt notions of 'liveness' – have meant that little attention has so far been paid to the role that particular screening venues or cinemas have on shaping reception.

Large-scale audience research into cinema broadcast audiences has sought to understand reception in generalisable terms, surveying audiences across multiple venues in order to generate large sample sizes, and so has tended to overlook, or flatten out, the impact that venues might have in mediating the broadcast

experiences that they describe. NESTA's NT Live report for example, acknowledges that NT Live is 'very dependent on its partner cinemas to successfully promote the events' but the report's focus on assessing the impact of broadcasts on theatre attendance means that the function of screening venues on audience experience is not investigated (NESTA, 2011: 33). AEA's *Live-to-Digital* report did consider different types of venue in its surveys by asking producers what types of venues or screening platforms they had provided live-to-digital content for. They found that the most frequently cited venues were theatres and arts centres (24%), followed equally by cinemas (16%), schools (16%) and non-traditional venues (16%), but that organisations with larger budgets were significantly more likely to have programmed to cinemas (Reidy *et al.*, 2016: 36). The answers from the corresponding question in the audience survey – 'In what types of venues have you attended Event Cinema for a performance/cultural event (opera, cinema, etc.)?' – are not discussed in the main body of the report, but show that 'traditional cinema' was the most frequent type of venue (75%), followed by 'art-house cinema' (38%) and theatres (22%) (190). These figures indicate that most audiences are encountering theatre in cinemas, and that this work is most likely to have been produced by big-budget organisations, but they also indicate that audiences are regularly encountering theatre broadcasts in other kinds of venue.

However, the AEA report does not consider the impact that watching in these different kinds of venue might have of this on audience experience; in this report and others, audience experience is usually generalised and displaced from its multiple sites of reception. Similarly, academic research has also tended to speak of broadcast reception in general terms, drawing conclusions about experience from an analysis of broadcast material, rather than considering how different reception

venues might create multiple experiences. When the cinema has been acknowledged as a site of reception, it has usually only been to note that it provides a shared space of reception that might contribute to a sense of co-presence or liveness. The idea that screening venues are a largely irrelevant or unimportant aspect of broadcast reception is counteracted, however, by the first-person accounts of attending broadcasts that appear in reviews, media commentary, and occasionally, in academic literature on broadcasts. In her discussion of opera cinema, for example, Kay Armatage argues that The Met: Live in HD programme is creating a 'new breed of opera spectators', an assertion that is based on her own experiences of watching broadcasts at a multiplex cinema in Toronto. She details how both audiences and the venue have adjusted to a new format, with audiences bringing their own picnics in order to 'avoid the horrific concessions selling burgers and nachos' and the venue gradually beginning to cater for the tastes of a Saturday afternoon audience by 'attempting decent lattes' and providing tap water in a '*real* glass' (Armatage, 2012: 220). Armatage's anecdotal and tongue-in-cheek account demonstrates the ways in which a venue's offering can be a significant aspect of reception. The multiplex, which Armatage describes as 'being inside a pinball machine at full tilt' is designed for the consumption of blockbuster films rather than for watching opera, creating clashes between spectatorial and technical conventions, and resulting in moments of disjuncture and confusion in a way that might not be so evident in a theatre or art house cinema (219).

The impact of venues on reception is also evident in Barker's audience study. Barker's research was conducted in collaboration with Picturehouse Cinemas, a chain of twenty-five premium cinemas across the UK. Although Barker does not directly acknowledge it, taking his results to be more or less representative of the

broadcast audience as a whole, the Picturehouse brand emerges as a significant factor in shaping audience experience in the qualitative responses that he presents. Audience members mentioned the comfort of the cinema and its facilities as positive aspects of their experiences, and were especially appreciative of features such as ‘a good system for ordering drinks for the interval’ (Barker, 2013: 32). Suggestions about improving the broadcast experience from audiences cohere around a desire for the cinema to resemble the theatre in its approach, including banning popcorn, having a bell sound when the second half is about to begin, and the suggestion that the cinema ‘sell wine that is pleasant to drink’ (36-7). Whilst the way that the venue crafts experience through food, drinks, and facilities is obviously important to the audiences Barker surveys, he also identifies that venues also play a wider role in audience experiences. Noting that audiences displayed a sense of ownership over the specifically local spaces of screening venues, he concludes that ‘for many people particular cinemas can add further, special senses of *localness*’ leading to ‘a powerful sense of participating in the *occasion*’ (32). In this sense, the local cinema or screening venue does not just stand in as a (lesser) substitute for the theatre, but ‘might become a different kind of cultural site’ (32).

Like many of the early investigations into theatre broadcasts, Barker’s study has a broad scope, and his exploration of the importance of venue does not extend much beyond the identification of localness as a particular aspect of this new form of spectatorship. Screening venues are not the primary investigation of his research, and because the survey was distributed to Picturehouse audiences only, the research design is limited in what it can reveal about the relationship between different types of venue and cinema broadcast experiences. Picturehouse is a luxury cinema brand (owned by Cineworld) operating mostly in London and in selected city

centre locations around the UK. The cinemas are stylish and modern, often include a bar/cafe, and have medium-sized auditoriums with comfortable seating. As a premium brand, they command a premium price; an adult ticket for NT Live's *All My Sons* (2019) at Picturehouse Greenwich costs £22.00 (£17.50 concession), compared to £20.70 (£16.70 concession) at nearby West India Quays Cineworld, and £15.75 (£13.75) at Surrey Quays Odeon.[18] Barker's portrait of the emerging live theatre broadcast audience as a demanding audience who 'knows what it likes […] and the conditions under which it expects to get it' and 'likes quality and has a strong sense […] of what this amounts to' is likely to be influenced, at least in part, by the fact that the audiences surveyed were those willing to pay a premium for a luxury spectatorship experience, rather than, for example, those attending at out-of-town multiplexes.

More recently, Keir Elam has explored how screening venues might impact the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts by considering the framing of NT Live's *Hamlet* (2015) by two cinemas in Bologna, Italy. Drawing on an analysis of how the two venues positioned the screenings through paratextual material, Elam argues that 'the reception of the same, simultaneous, event may have been different in the venues in question, due to conditioning by their respective micro-cultural contexts' (2018: 194). As Elam observes, 'different cinemas have distinct cultural histories, and attract, at least in part, different kinds of audience' (94). Different kinds of venue, then, may attract different kinds of audience, with different attitudes and motivations. It is also possible that the venues at which audiences choose to watch influence how audiences approach, enjoy, and value their experiences. As audience experiences,

[18] Correct as of 6th February 2019.

broadcasts watched at screening venues represent complex and layered negotiations with different types of cultural value, brands and content; value is derived not just by going to watch ‘Shakespeare’ or the ‘National Theatre’ on screen, but also from attending and watching that content at a community cinema, multiplex, boutique cinema or other screening venue.

Elam’s focus on the ‘micro-cultural contexts’ of the screening venue intersects with an emerging body of work in film studies termed ‘New Cinema History’. As Richard Maltby explains, ‘New Cinema History’ represents a shift in film history from a focus on ‘the content of films to consider their circulation and consumption, and to examine the cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange’ (Maltby, 2011: 3). As Lies Van de Vijer defines in an article applying New Cinema History to contemporary cinema-going,

> New Cinema History envisions a social history of a cultural institution, and aims to identify film as a cultural artefact consumed by a variety of audiences. The research in this field is characterized by microhistories of specific places and audiences, and it is differentiated from a historiography of the medium based on its aesthetics, critical and interpretative dimensions.
>
> (Van de Vijer, 2017: 130)

By re-situating film history within its contexts of reception, and understanding reception as something that is dependent on the histories of both cinemas and its audiences, New Cinema History also allows a consideration of audience experience that extends beyond the moment of encounter with the film. Instead, as Maltby explains, it positions experience as something that is also conditioned by the audiences’ ‘individual and collective social circumstances’ and the interpretative frameworks that are available to them (2011: 14).

In the remainder of this chapter, I apply a New Cinema History approach to cinema broadcast experiences by examining the reception of NT Live's *Macbeth* (2018) at two screening venues in Southern England. Developing Elam's comparative approach, I integrate the results of audience surveys conducted at each screening with my own personal observations from attending the screenings, as well as considering each venue's paratextual framing of the event to understand how the venues shaped reception. To contextualise the results I begin by providing detailed profiles of the venues, describing their locations, histories, architecture, and programming. Drawing on my own experience visiting the venues as well as marketing materials, I outline the way in which the venues position themselves in relation to live theatre broadcasts and, more generally, as distinct cultural sites. As part of these profiles, I outline the key demographic features of the audience attending each screening. In the discussion that follows I focus on the themes and interpretative frameworks that emerge as significant in shaping the broadcast experiences of these audiences: the intersection of 'localness' and value, the negotiation of cinema and theatre spectatorship, connection and community, the value of different kinds of cultural experiences, and the perceived value of Shakespeare. In providing these two in-depth case studies, I hope to address the gap in both academic and industry research to date by beginning to explore and understand the key role that venues play in mediating and shaping how audiences experience and value Shakespeare in performance.

The reception of NT Live's *Macbeth* (2018) at two UK screening venues

In order to explore how venues might impact audience reception, I carried out surveys at two UK venues showing NT Live's *Macbeth* in May 2018. Both venues were in the south of England: the Rio Cinema in Dalston, London, and Farnham Maltings, a creative arts centre in Farnham, Surrey. The production, starring Rory Kinnear and Anne-Marie Duff, was broadcast live to cinemas from the Olivier Theatre on Thursday 10th May 2018, but both venues opted to hold 'delayed' screenings, which meant that I was able to attend a screening at Rio Cinema on the afternoon of Sunday 13th May, and at Farnham Maltings the following evening. Personally attending both screenings meant that I was able to gather information about the venues and the way they presented the screenings, as well as getting a sense of what it felt like to be part of the audience in each space. I conducted audience research at each venue via a paper questionnaire handed out to attending audience members as they arrived, collecting completed surveys at the end of each screening. The questionnaire was not designed to ask audiences about their reactions to this particular production, but rather to find out about their experiences of, and responses to, Shakespeare broadcasts and the venue in general. It asked both for quantitative and qualitative responses, including questions about audiences' relationship with the venue, with theatre broadcasts, with Shakespeare, and with live performance. It surveyed audiences about their motivations for attending, and asked about how connected they felt to other audience members and to the performance. It also asked about viewing behaviours, including who they usually attend with, and what they tend to do before, during and after cinema broadcasts (see full questionnaire Appendix 1).

The amount of data collected from these audience surveys is relatively small, with 24 completed responses collected at Farnham Maltings and 17 at Rio Cinema. This is partly due to low attendance at the Rio, and the fact that audiences at both venues contained a number of under 18s, who were unable to complete the survey because of ethics requirements. The data discussed here is not intended to be representative of reception at either venue, or of reception at similar kinds of venue, and it does not create a generalisable portrait of the wider audience for Shakespeare broadcasts to cinemas. Indeed, part of the argument arising from this investigation is that each venue hosting broadcasts of Shakespeare creates specific conditions of reception and attracts audiences for a matrix of reasons which might be geographical, economic, cultural, or emotional.

As the case studies only cover two venues, this research is necessarily limited in its scope for describing differences across types of venue, and in different geographic areas of the UK. Existing research such as Barker's (2013) has indicated that audiences in London might have particular behaviours and values, and I was interested in investigating this further by conducting research at a London venue. There are a total of 59 cinemas and venues in London listed on the venue page of the NT Live website (not including venues in outer London boroughs), ranging from multiplexes to community cinemas.[19] UK-wide multiplex cinema chains including Odeon, Cineworld and Vue Cinemas are the most common type of venue (41%) in the capital, followed by 'premium' cinema chains, including Picturehouse, Everyman and Curzon cinemas (34%). These 'premium' brands all occupy a similar space in the cinema ecology, offering alternative, as well as mainstream, programming, with a

[19] Data is taken from the list of NT Live venues at: http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk/venues (Accessed 6 February 2019).

focus on atmosphere, comfort, and quality. Five of the venues are multi-arts centres, hosting cinema and arts screenings as part of a wider programme of arts and live performance. Five of the eight independently run cinemas showing NT Live in London are boutique, or luxury cinemas, offering premium and exclusive experiences for audiences, leaving just three independent community-run cinemas, two of which are run on a not-for-profit basis and show a mixture of mainstream and alternative content. As Barker notes, larger companies are often involved in undertaking their own commercial research and so may be less receptive to small, individual projects (Barker, 2013: vii). I therefore approached a number of the independent community cinemas and multi-arts centres in London about the possibility of conducting research at one of their Shakespeare screenings and the Rio Cinema, an independent community-run cinema in Dalston agreed to take part.[20]

Across the rest of the UK, there are 628 venues which show NT Live. Although the most common venues remain large multiplex cinemas, which constitute a slightly higher percentage of the total venues (43%) than they do within London, the overall picture of reception in terms of venue type is more diverse than within the capital. Cinemas operated by smaller chains, which outside of London also include brands such as Merlin Cinemas and Light Cinemas, are much less dominant (14%), with premium brands only operating within cities and larger towns. There is a similar proportion of independent and community cinemas (13%), with screenings also being held in schools, restaurants, cafes, and, in one instance, a bookshop. A much larger proportion of the venues outside of London (22%) are mixed-arts or

[20] Other venues either did not respond, or replied that they felt that they did not have the staff resource to help coordinate the research.

community venues. Serving local communities, these venues are cultural hubs, with cinema and event screenings representing part of a larger programme of arts and live performance activities. They range from purpose-built arts centres with full auditoria, to village halls or community centres. Additionally, 22 (4%) of the venues are theatres, meaning that outside of London, NT Live is more often received in spaces that are also occupied and associated with a mix of live performance genres and screen media. Farnham Maltings, a multi-use arts centre 60 miles outside of London, is emblematic of this kind of space. I was put in touch with the Artistic Director and the venue agreed to allow me to undertake research at one of their screenings.

As an independent cinema in London and an arts centre in Surrey, the case studies below can indicate how audiences might be relating to Shakespeare broadcasts and venues differently depending on location and type of venue. Quite clearly, however, these venues are comparatively close to each other and are not representative of the UK, or even London and Surrey, audience. Considering the variety and number of venues within the UK described above, understanding reception across all types of venue and across a wider range of geographical locations is outside the scope of this study. That is not to say, however, that these case studies cannot tell us anything about the impact of geographical location on reception. Indeed, the fact that they are both in an area often collectively described as ‘London and the surrounding areas’ presents opportunities to investigate the particular relationship between London and its neighbouring counties in relation to theatre production and reception, as well as investigating the nuances of reception in a London venue. Rather than providing a comprehensive picture of venue reception generally then, this study is designed to begin to explore and highlight the impact

that venues might have on how audiences relate to, experience, and value their encounters with Shakespeare performance through cinema broadcasts.

Venue Profiles

The Rio Cinema, Dalston, North-East London

The Rio Cinema is an independently-run community cinema situated on Kingsland High Street, Dalston, Hackney. The cinema is housed in a Grade-II listed Art Deco building and contains a 400 seat main auditorium with art deco features, and a new 28 seat second screen in a previously unused basement space. The building has been in use as a cinema for over 100 years and has been running in its current form as a not-for-profit registered charity with an elected board of local volunteer trustees since 1979. The cinema is an established local landmark and relies on significant investment and support from the local community. The Rio programmes one or two main feature films every week, as well as programming independent film and hosting film festivals. They run special screenings for parents and babies, the over 60s, and schools, positioning themselves as a cinema that serves both film fans, and the community more generally. NT Live is the only theatre or performing arts screening programme regularly shown at the Rio, although the cinema puts on other one-off special events, such as streaming the Eurovision Song Contest live and screening archival footage of classic World Cup football matches. Peak time tickets to regular film screenings cost £11.50 (£9.50 concessions), and NT Live tickets cost £15 (£13 concessions). The Rio also offers a range of memberships, with members benefitting from discounted ticket prices and discounts at local restaurants.

The Rio's main marketing and programming focus is on attracting and serving a core local audience, diverse in demographic and interests, but particularly interested in niche programming such as independent, international, and LGBT+ films. The cinema's branding reflects this; as the screenshots below show (Fig. 1 and

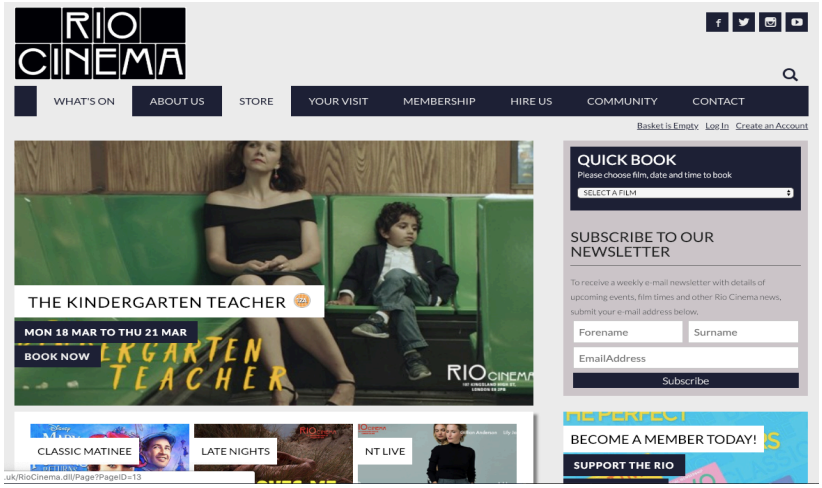

Figure 1: The Rio Cinema website homepage - http://riocinema.org.uk/ - screenshot taken by the author 17 March 2019.

Fig. 2) the cinema's website and email communications are modern and designed with a retro aesthetic, drawing on the art-deco design of the building as well as more recent eras of cinema-going such as the 1980s and 1990s. The cinema also builds on its brand as a unique cinematic site for experiencing independent and 'cult' film through running an online store that sells 'Rio' merchandise such as t-shirts and tote bags with the cinema's branding, as well as film-related jewellery and posters made by local designers. The physical location of the cinema and the design of the exterior and interior space also contribute to the cinema's 'retro' aesthetic, and the sense that watching a film there is both a unique and nostalgic experience. From the curb, the cinema appears relatively run-down, maintaining its art-deco exterior and traditional cinema signage (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). Inside, there is an old-style ticket kiosk, leading

to a small foyer and cafe/bar area, serving locally made food and drinks including coffee, alcohol and cakes. As the cinema describes, the auditorium itself adds ‘to the traditional cinematic experience’ with ‘plush red velvet seats, atmospheric music before the show, and long red curtains that swish back before the film starts (Rio Cinema, 2019; see Fig. 10).

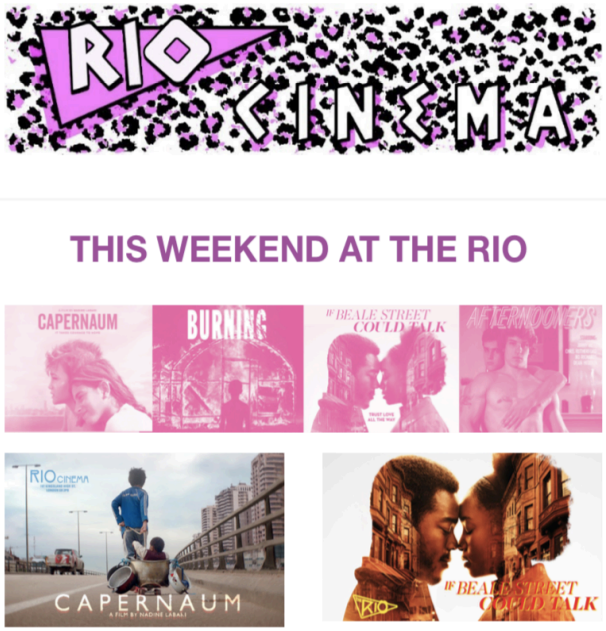

Figure 3: The Rio email newsletter. Screenshot taken by the author 17 March 2019.

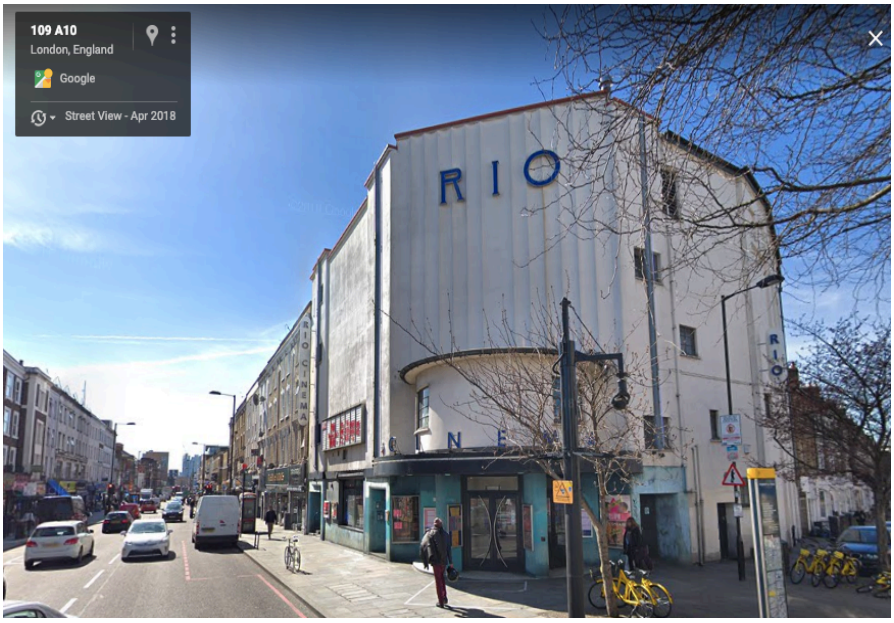

Figure 2: Exterior of the Rio Cinema. Google Maps screenshot.

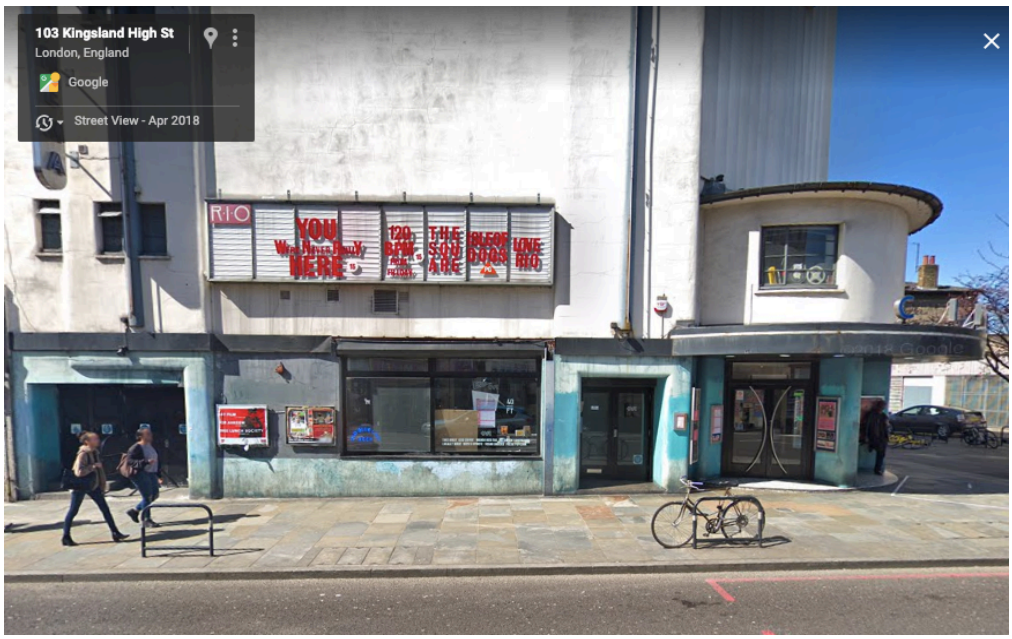

Figure 4: Exterior of the Rio Cinema. Google Maps screenshot.

The Rio is locally focused, drawing its audience from the local community, and supporting local businesses and enterprise. The importance of localness is explored in more detail below, but the fact that 71% of audiences at the *Macbeth* screening took between 1 and 20 minutes to travel to the venue, with 43% getting there by walking, serves to indicate that the majority of the audience are relatively local to the venue, living either in Hackney or, as it is positioned towards the west boundary of the borough, in neighbouring Islington. Hackney and Islington are both boroughs with a high proportion of young people, with Hackney's largest number of people between the ages of 25 to 39, and Islington's between 20 and 39. Hackney in particular is a culturally diverse borough: in 2011 36% of residents were White British, 16.3% 'Other White', 16.3% Black African and 11.4% Black Caribbean (Islington's census figures showed 48% of people were White British, 32% were

Black and Minority Ethnic and 20% were 'Other White).[21] Both boroughs rank comparatively badly in relation to deprivation, with the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation finding that Hackney was the eleventh most deprived area in England, and Islington the 24th.[22] However, both areas have seen rapid improvement in relation to deprivation in recent years (Hackney was the second most deprived area in 2010 and Islington the eleventh). Both areas, and Hackney in particular, have been subject to recent development, sometimes described as 'gentrification', attracting young professionals with money to spend in new businesses such as coffee shops and pop-ups such as Boxpark in Shoreditch. Hackney Council's profile of the borough states that the increase in employment rates since 2010 'can be largely attributed to a working age population which is better educated, more skilled and working in higher level jobs' suggesting that this development has caused the population of Hackney to shift, becoming wealthier and better educated (LB Hackney Policy and Insight Team, 2019: 24).

This means that the Rio's potential audience is comprised of a wide spectrum of people who are predominantly younger or middle-aged and ethnically and economically diverse. As a historical local landmark that has been running in its current form for over thirty years, the cinema is not a direct part of recent gentrification, but likely benefits from the resultant increase in wealthy and well-

[21] Figures for Hackney are taken from LB Hackney Policy and Insight Team (2019) 'A Profile of Hackney, its People and Place'. Figures for Islington are taken from Islington Borough Council (2018) 'State of Equalities in Islington: Annual Report'.

[22] The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) are 'a measure of relative deprivation used to rank neighbourhoods across the UK […] intended to offer multidimensional information on material living conditions in an area or neighbourhood based on a 'lack of' living necessities causing an unfulfilled social or economic need, relative to the rest of the country' (Armitage, 2017). Data taken from the Indices of Deprivation 2015 Explorer (http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html).

educated local people interested in the creative arts and film. The kind of creative community that the Rio operates in is exemplified by its voluntary trustees, all of whom live in the local area, and currently include a previous COO of Curzon cinemas and the Head of Documentaries at the Guardian. In its provision of independent and art film, the Rio can be seen as part of an artistic culture and community that positions itself against mainstream culture, providing an alternative space for encountering alternative cinema.

The Rio programmes some NT Live broadcasts on their live broadcast date and others as delayed screenings. *Macbeth* was shown as a delayed screening on a Sunday matinee slot starting at 13.30. Tickets were available to purchase in advance via the cinema's website. The cinema was open only for the screening and a private function in its second screen. The audience gathered outside the cinema as they waited for it to open, moving into the small bar/cafe area and then into the auditorium. The screening took place in the main 400-seat auditorium, although the audience was comprised of between only 25 and 30 people. I assisted a member of staff handing out a print-out of NT Live's cast list to audiences seated in the auditorium, also taking the opportunity to hand out and introduce my survey. In total, 17 audience members completed and returned the paper survey. Broadly reflecting the age profile of the local area, respondents were mostly middle-aged or younger, with 47% aged between 45 and 54, 13% between 35 and 44, and 27% between 25 and 34. There were no respondents aged 18-24, although there were a number of under-18s in the audience, who could not take part in the survey in line with the ethical approval for the project. Just one respondent was over the age of 65. Unlike the profile of the local area, respondents were overwhelmingly white, with 53% identifying as 'White British' and 20% as 'White'. One respondent identified as 'White

Australian', two as 'English' and one as 'Irish'. 53% of the respondents described themselves as male, and 47% as female.

Farnham Maltings, Farnham, Surrey

Farnham Maltings is a multi-arts cultural centre and organisation based in the town of Farnham in south-west Surrey. The centre is run as a registered charity, operating independently of any large governmental funding, and is housed in an old brewery, which was converted into an arts centre for the community in the 1970s. It is comprised of a number of spaces with capacities ranging between 15 and 500 people, which can be used for performances, craft events, classes, markets, exhibitions, wedding receptions, and workshops. In terms of performing and visual arts, the Maltings runs a varied programme including theatre, film, comedy, music, and family theatre, the breadth of which is evident on their website (Fig. 5). An extensive event screening programme sits alongside the live programme of events, comprising its own category on the Maltings website. As well as NT Live, the Maltings also hosts screenings from the Met Opera, Exhibition on Screen, the Royal Opera House, the Royal Ballet, the RSC, Glyndebourne Opera, and other one-off events (Fig. 12). These screenings are often not shown on their live broadcast dates, but as delayed screenings, sometimes a few days after they were originally broadcast, and in some cases much later, although they are not explicitly advertised as delayed or encore screenings. A similar approach is taken to film screenings, which are shown a few weeks or months after their theatrical release, with a few screenings of the same film across one day.

The mission of the centre is focused on fostering creativity within the local community, positioning itself as a hub for creative and cultural activity. The Maltings is not only a place where people come to participate as audiences, but it also provides the facilities, spaces, and support for the creation of creative work. As well as being a venue for touring productions, the organisation also functions as a producing theatre, focusing on developing and supporting artists to make new work for audiences in south-east England and beyond. The centre provides rehearsal studios, dance studios, and a pottery and kiln room, which host workshops, as well as local community and voluntary group meetings, making it a catalyst for creativity and community. As the Maltings articulates in the 'vision and values' section of its website, they hope that by 'encouraging people to participate in the arts, as audience and makers' they will 'foster a healthier, happier and safer contemporary Britain' (Farnham Maltings, n.d.).

The Maltings' focus on positioning itself as a space for the local community is practically reinforced in its buildings, which are a historic, and picturesque part of Farnham's history (Fig. 7). Its location at the edge of the town centre makes it easily accessible to those living within the town but also to those in the surrounding area and slightly further afield, who are able to utilise the venue's large car park. Of the respondents at the *Macbeth* screening, 78% reported that they travelled to the venue via car, with the remainder walking, and 86% said that their travel time was under 20 minutes, implying that audiences were mostly either from Farnham or the surrounding areas. The venue includes a bar and café in its reception space, as well as a shop selling locally-made products and a bookshelf functioning as a community library (Fig. 6). The venue also offers membership with ticket discounts, and also

encourages the local community to support the venue via a patronage scheme or by volunteering.

The community that this venue serves is predominantly white, with the 2011 census reporting that 90.6% of people living in Waverley, the borough in which the Maltings is situated, were White British, making it the least ethnically diverse borough in Surrey.[23] It is also mostly middle-aged or older, with the largest number of people in the borough between 40 and 54 years of age.[24] Children between 5 and 19 also comprise a high proportion of the population, suggesting that there are a lot of families with children of various ages in the area. There are fewer 20 to 39 year olds locally, and the older population is increasing in size; between 2001 and 2011 the population aged 60 to 64 increased by 35%.[25] Levels of deprivation in the area are low, with the areas around the Maltings ranking in the 30-40% least deprived areas in England (Open Data Communities, 2015). The town has good transport connections to London making it a popular commuter town, further boosting the local economy.

The screening of *Macbeth* was a delayed screening held on a Monday evening, starting at 19.00 in the venue's Great Hall (Fig. 11). Tickets were available to purchase in advance for £15 via the website and the screening was relatively well attended, with the venue reporting having sold 171 advance tickets, including a school party of 80. The audience congregated in the bar area before the screening, where they could buy drinks, and filtered into the hall via a corridor once the doors were opened shortly before the screening. As they arrived in the hall they were

[23] Figures taken from Surrey-i (2011) '2011 Census: Ethnicity'.
[24] Figures taken from Surrey-i (2019)'Surrey Context: People and Places'.
[25] Figures taken from Surrey-i (2011) 'First Results (population change, age structure and household size)'

handed a print-out of NT Live's cast list by one of the Maltings' volunteers with whom I stationed myself to hand out surveys and pens. 24 surveys were completed and handed back to me after the screening. The demographic of the respondents largely reflects the local population. They were predominantly white, with 71% identifying either as 'White' or 'White British' (the remaining respondents stated that they were 'British' or 'English'). 52% of respondents were between 45 and 64 years of age, and a further 26% were over the age of 65, reflecting the older population. 13% were between 35 and 44, and 9% between 18 and 24, with none of the respondents aged between 25 and 34. There were a number of under 18's in the audience, most of whom were teenagers - who, as I explore below, may have been studying the play for their GCSE exams - but again, they are not represented in the survey due to ethics requirements.

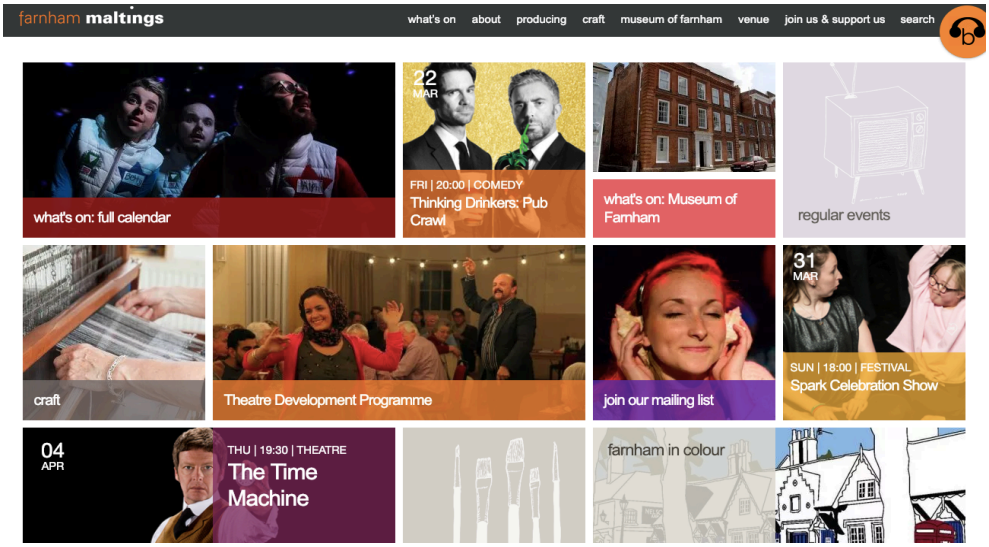

Figure 5: Farnham Maltings website. Screenshot taken by the author 17 March 2019.

Figure 6: Interior of Farnham Maltings' communal area and entrance. Google Maps. Screenshot taken by the author 17 March 2019.

Figure 7: Exterior of Farnham Maltings. Google Maps. Screenshot taken by the author 17 March 2019.

Determining Value: Localness, 'Quality', and Shakespeare

Across both venues, three particular elements emerged as significant in shaping how audiences valued and approached their experiences, each of which I explore below. Firstly, I discuss how the venue, and in particular, the 'localness' of the venue, was articulated as an important factor in motivating audiences to attend. Secondly, I examine how the prestige of the theatre company and the opportunity to access 'good quality' theatre was significant, especially for audiences at Farnham Maltings, arguing that the venues were active in positioning broadcasts as 'premium' experiences. Lastly, I explore how ideas about Shakespeare factored into audience motivations and experiences.

'An institution worth supporting'

Although broadcast screenings constitute encounters with a geographically distant performance, the 'local' emerged as a particularly important aspect of audience experiences. When asked why they chose these venues, closeness to home and the convenience of not having to travel far were the most commonly mentioned factors by respondents at both venues. The majority of audiences took under 20 minutes to travel to the screenings (72% Maltings, 86% Rio), corroborating Martin Barker's findings that audiences tend not to travel very far to reach cinema screenings. However, as Barker also found with his Picturehouse audiences, audiences at both the Rio and Farnham Maltings displayed 'a strong sense of the value of *localness*' that went beyond physical proximity or convenience (Barker, 2013: 31). As the maps and tables below show (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9), there are four NT Live venues within a 2 mile radius of the Rio, including two 'premium' cinema chains (Hackney

Picturehouse and Everyman Screen-on-the-Green), the independent Castle Cinema, and Islington VUE. Whilst the nearest venues to Farnham Maltings are much further away, the venue is still within a half-hour's drive, not only from the four venues listed, but also from another four shown on the map as small red dots. The maps suggest that, depending on where an audience member might actually live, the choices audiences make to attend these venues to watch an NT Live screening are based on more than just physical distance or travelling time.

Barker notes that 'particular cinemas can add further, special senses of *localness'* for some audiences, who might feel a sense of ownership over the space, and subsequently over their experiences, that they may not experience at live performance venues' (2013: 32). This special sense of localness is evident in responses from both audience groups. When asked why they chose to watch at the Maltings, audiences explained that they were 'a member and great supporter of Farnham Maltings', that they '[l]ove supporting the Maltings', and that the Maltings is a local venue that they 'like to support'. Similarly, a number of audience members at the Rio also said that supporting the venue was a reason for attending, with one describing the cinema as 'an institution worth supporting'. For these audience members, deciding to attend the *Macbeth* broadcast at these venues was not simply a matter of convenience, but a way of supporting and contributing to a valued community venue.

These comments display an element of the sense of belonging and ownership that Barker identifies in Picturehouse audiences (2013: 32), but in these cases the sense of 'ownership' is extended and complicated by the way in which these venues have positioned themselves in relation to their local communities and audiences, the roles that they play within those communities, and their financially independent

nature. The venues are recognised by these audiences as institutions that both require, and deserve, their support. Although the Aldershot Cineworld or the Hackney Picturehouse could also be described as 'local' to these audiences, it is unlikely (although, of course, not impossible) that they would see watching an NT Live screening at those venues as an act of support in quite the same way. The 'local' here, then, represents a dynamic relationship between audience and venue, with broadcast spectatorship valued not only by audience members as experiences, but as opportunities to help support the running of the venue.

That some audiences saw their spectatorship of *Macbeth* as a way of actively contributing to a venue that they felt some ownership over reflects the fact that many of the respondents attended the venues regularly. 29% of respondents at Farnham Maltings had attended more than 20 times over the past 12 months, with most of these reporting that they had attended between 30-40 times, and one specifying that she attended every week for dance lessons. Although the most common rate of attendance was between 2-5 times (33%), an additional 12% had attended between 15-20 times, indicating that a large proportion of the audience were very familiar with the venue. At the Rio, rates of attendance were more polarised with 65% having attended between 2-5 times and two respondents (12%) having attended over 20 times. Just four respondents at each venue said that it was the first time they had ever attended the venue, indicating that the majority of audiences had an existing relationship with the venue before watching this broadcast.

Map Ref	Cinema	Distance from Rio (miles)	Travel Time Walking (mins)	Travel Time Public Transport
A	Rio Cinema	0	0	0
B	Hackney Picturehouse	1.1	23	12
C	Castle Cinema	1.5	31	16
D	Everyman Screen-on-the-green	1.7	34	20
E	Islington VUE	1.9	39	23

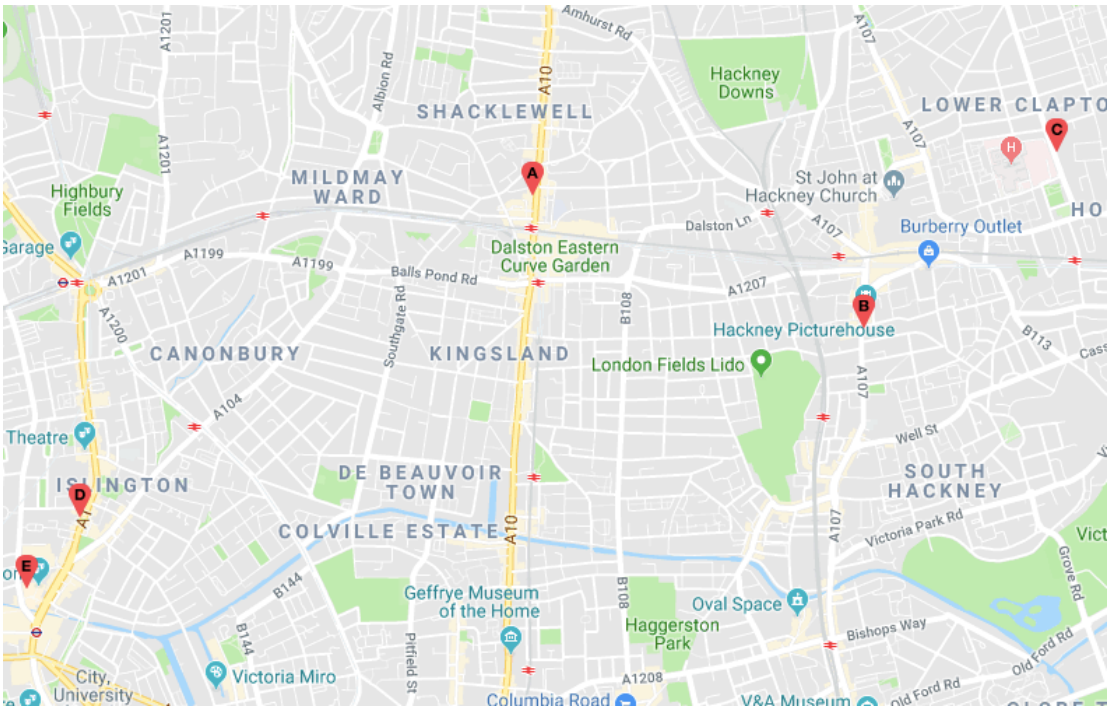

Figure 8: Map and table showing the location of Rio Cinema and its closest NT Live venues (based on data for *All My Sons* May 2019), as well as travel times to each location from the Rio.

Map Ref	Cinema	Distance from FM (miles)	Travel Time Driving (mins)	Travel Time Public Transport (mins)
A	Farnham Maltings	0	0	0
B	Aldershot Cineworld	3.9	13	25
C	Farnborough VUE	6.7	18	51
D	Camberley VUE	11.7	21	48
E	Camberley Theatre	11.9	22	48

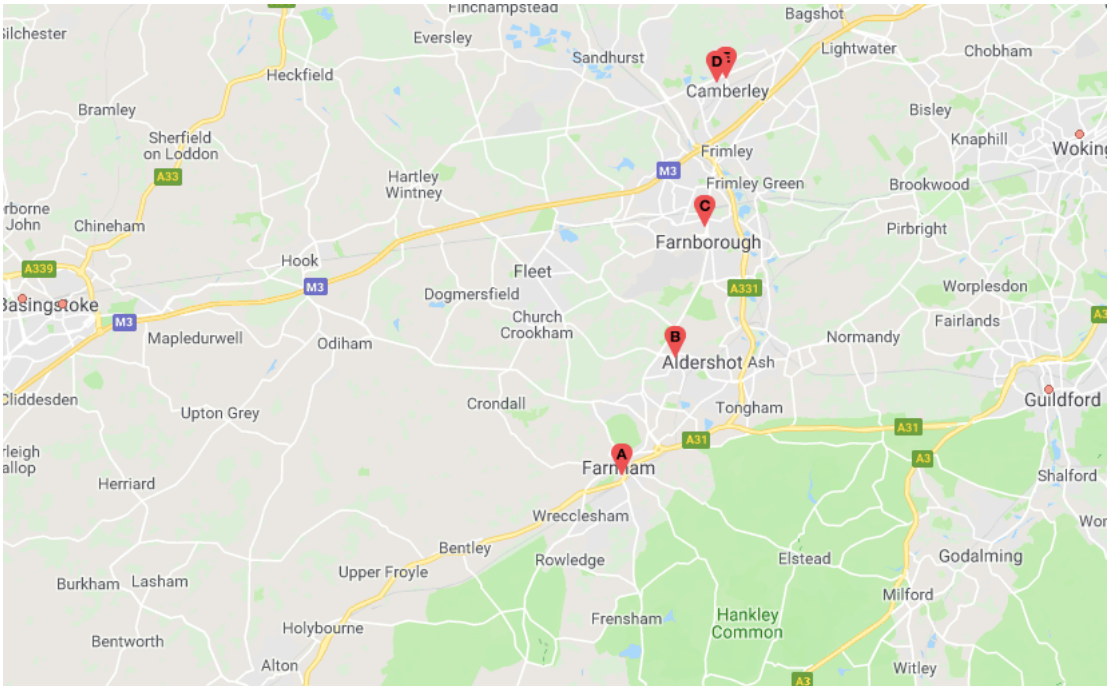

Figure 9: Map and table showing the location of Farnham Maltings and its closest NT Live venues (based on data for *All My Sons* May 2019), as well as travel times to each location from the Maltings.

Existing relationships between audiences and venues not only shape how audiences value their broadcast experiences, but are also key to the marketing of NT Live. Information from the venues and via word of mouth were the most common ways that audiences found out about theatre screenings at the Rio and the Maltings, corroborating Daisy Abbott and Claire Read's findings that word of mouth and publicity from the screening venue were the most common ways that audiences at three different venues found out about NT Live's *Hamlet* (2015) (Abbott and Read, 2017: 177-8). 58% of respondents at the Maltings said they had found out about broadcasts via advertising at the venue, with searching the venue's website and other communications from the venue the next equally common methods (33%). 17% said that interval announcements during a previous screening had alerted them to a broadcast and the same number said they had found out via word of mouth. Local methods of communication were even more important to audiences at the Rio, 47% of whom had found out about a broadcast through word of mouth. The other selected methods at the Rio were advertising at the venue (33%) and searching the venue's website (20%), with just one respondent saying they had used the National Theatre website and another that they had googled to find out about upcoming screenings.

These findings reinforce the importance of 'personal and social contacts' and 'local-level marketing and promotion' in spreading awareness of NT Live's events (Abbott and Read, 2017: 177-8). Such a reliance on venue-level networks allows NT Live (and other broadcasting companies) to access an already-established, nationwide audience base with little advertising, but potentially also limits the reach of the broadcasts. In order to find out about cinema broadcasts, these results show, audiences must already be broadcast attendees or connected to the venue, or have

personal contacts who know and talk about theatre broadcasts. Cinema broadcasts are therefore restricted in their ability to reach audiences outside of these networks. Although there were some attendees in each audience for whom the screening was their first visit to the venue, the low numbers also indicate that, for these screenings at least, theatre broadcasts might not be a particularly successful tool for attracting new audiences to screening venues. However, these surveys show that the pre-existing relationships between venues and their audiences are important in framing how audiences perceive of, and value, their participation. For these audiences, the venues were not simply convenient spaces in which to watch a performance of *Macbeth*, but were important local institutions, valuable not just for how close they are, but for what they offer more widely to the community. The 'localness' of the venues prompted audiences to reconfigure their spectatorship as an act of support; these were not only encounters with Shakespeare on the stage, but important encounters with valued local venues.

An 'easy way to see serious theatre'

As well as positioning participation within the context of the local, the venues had an active role in determining how audiences valued their experiences in other ways. At the Maltings, NT Live is programmed alongside opera from the Royal Opera House, visual art screenings from the National Gallery, and other theatre offerings from the RSC, associating NT Live theatre screenings with well-known 'high culture' brands and experiences. The positioning of NT Live as a premium experience is emphasised by the pricing of tickets. Although the minimum amount that venues can charge for tickets is determined by NT Live, venues can decide on the amount they

charge above this. The £15 cost of a full price NT Live ticket is more than double that of a regular cinema ticket at the Maltings at £7. Interestingly, NT Live is also priced above some tickets for live theatre at the Maltings, with standard tickets for a touring production of *The Tempest* by the HandleBards, for example, costing £12.

The idea that NT Live is a premium experience is reflected in the way that the Maltings audiences described their main reasons for attending theatre broadcasts. It was notable how often the Maltings audience included value judgments in their comments, writing that they valued the 'ease of access to *great* theatre', the ability to 'see the *best* performances available', the chance to 'see a *highly regarded* production', or to watch a '*professional* production'. For this audience, broadcasts were an 'easy way to see *serious theatre*', stating that it is 'good to see *quality theatre* close to home' and that NT Live makes 'such *amazing* and *well received* plays so accessible' (emphasis added). For these audiences, event cinema provides access not only to theatre, but specifically to *high quality* theatre.

As well as value judgements about the quality of the productions, the comments also frequently mentioned broadcasts being cheaper and easier than travelling to London. Seven of the 23 comments mentioned London, implying that they perceived theatre from large, mostly London-based, producing companies as particularly valuable. Comments such as 'easy way to see plays without going to London' or 'convenient [...] to see such plays locally without the time and cost of travelling to London' imply that travelling to London to see the play in the theatre is a viable, if more expensive, option for these audiences, positioning the NT Live broadcasts as an alternative (rather than the only) way of encountering the play. Whilst the NT is 41.5 miles away from Farnham, the town is well-connected to London by train, with travel taking just over an hour and costing £20.80 for an adult

return ticket. Travelling to London to see theatre is therefore a reasonable, but not universally accessible, possibility. Indeed, when asked about the theatre and performance venues they had visited over the past 12 months, 13 of 21 respondents named at least one London-based theatre (two named the National Theatre) indicating that attending London theatre is a regular feature of their theatre-going practices. The way in which the Maltings positions NT Live as a premium experience attracts audiences used to travelling to London to see 'prestigious' theatre, and who appreciate being able to access such theatre without the cost and effort of travelling. However, it also risks reinforcing comparisons of value between London and regional theatre; although they did not explicitly state it, the specific description of theatre from the NT as high quality and serious, implies that these audiences deem locally available live theatre, perhaps at the Maltings, as less serious and of 'lower' quality.

At the Rio, none of the respondents articulated their motivations for attending in terms of accessing 'great' or 'high quality' theatre, suggesting that this is an attitude to broadcasts particularly conditioned by the physical location of the Maltings and the way in which NT Live was positioned as part of a larger programme of 'high' cultural events by the venue. Like the Maltings, a full price ticket at the Rio for the *Macbeth* screening was £15, 30% more than the cost of a regular full price peak-time cinema ticket at £11.50. Although this pricing model also establishes NT Live as a premium experience, the venue markets the programme alongside a diverse series of events such as a feminist film festival, screenings of classic World Cup football matches, and a live broadcast of the Eurovision song contest. In this the Rio builds value for audiences in a slightly different way, positioning NT Live not as an experience with an especially 'high' form of culture but as an 'alternative' special event that is part of popular culture and conversation.

The location of the Rio also shaped how audiences articulated their motivations for attending. Unsurprisingly given that it is located in the city, none of the respondents compared the experience to the alternative of travelling to London, although three comments did mention that it was easier to travel to the cinema than to the National Theatre. Although the Rio is only 4.4 miles away from the NT, the journey takes around 40 minutes on public transport, just 20 minutes less than travelling from the Maltings, meaning that convenience is still a significant factor. Cost, however, was much less of a factor for this audience: the journey to the NT is significantly cheaper at around £4 each way, and the price of an NT Live ticket is not much less than day or 'Friday Rush' tickets at the NT itself (£15/£18 and £20 respectively). Availability, rather than cost, of live tickets was a motivation for Rio audiences, with two audience members saying that the broadcasts provide the opportunity to see performances when they are sold out and that it is 'easier to get tickets' at the cinema; a factor that is not mentioned at all by Maltings audiences.

The physical distance of a venue from the broadcasting theatre, and perhaps more importantly, the ease and cost of traversing that distance, influences the decision-making involved in attending a broadcast. Along with programming and the pricing of screenings, it also has an important impact on how audiences perceive of, and value, different kinds of theatrical experience. Positioned just outside of London, with the majority of audiences regularly travelling to London to watch theatre, the Maltings audiences' attitudes aligned with NT Live's assertion that they provide access to the 'best of British theatre' (NT Live, About Us), a sense of quality that is emphasised by the programming and pricing of theatre screenings at the Maltings. Such an attitude was not evident at the Rio, where NT Live was positioned differently, and audiences had easy access to a wider range of (less mainstream)

London theatre. These results show that whilst we can make general statements about the importance of convenience and cost to audiences, and about how NT Live and other broadcasting theatres position themselves, the motivations and models of value involved in broadcast spectatorship are complex, and depend on multiple factors that will be, in some way, specific to every screening venue.

'This guy can write'

Along with the venue, the results also indicated that different ideas about Shakespeare determined how these audiences approached and valued their broadcast experiences. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale between 1 (not at all important) and 10 (very important), how important they felt the fact that the play was a Shakespeare play was when choosing broadcasts to watch. The average scores were relatively similar at the Maltings (5.1) and the Rio (4.6), but the range was greater at the Maltings, with the most amount of audience members at the Maltings choosing 8, 7 or 1, with one respondent giving a score of 10. 8 was the highest score given at the Rio, with 8, 5 and 1 the most commonly chosen ratings. Responses to this question were quite mixed, indicating that whilst Shakespeare was more than fairly important for most people, a significant number felt that Shakespeare was not at all important to their decision to watch a broadcast.

Shakespeare was, however, an important factor for a number of audience members at both venues. 48% of Maltings audiences and 20% of Rio audiences indicated that they were a 'Shakespeare lover' when asked to choose from a list of statements they identified with, and when asked to explain the scores they gave to the question above, reasons given included a simple preference for Shakespeare,

writing that they ‘like Shakespeare’, ‘enjoy seeing Shakespeare in the theatre’ and ‘love Shakespeare so find that appealing’. Respondents also cited the familiarity of Shakespeare as a draw, with a Maltings respondent stating, ‘I prefer a classic; something I have read and know’ and a Rio audience member writing that ‘most modern plays are rubbish - this guy can write’.

As well as familiarity with Shakespeare, familiarity with the play was also a commonly given reason by the Maltings audience when they were asked why they chose to watch the *Macbeth* screening. Nine of 23 comments mentioned the play as a reason for attending, saying that they ‘enjoy Macbeth’, that ‘Macbeth is a good play’, that they ‘know Macbeth well’, and in one case that ‘Macbeth is my favourite Shakespeare play’. Two respondents also mentioned that, having seen *Macbeth* a number of times, they had attended the broadcast in order to compare it with productions of the play that they had seen previously. These comments suggest that part of the pleasure and value of watching a Shakespeare broadcast, and perhaps Shakespeare plays more broadly, is derived from watching a play that an audience member already knows and understands well. Repeat viewing of the same play across different productions allows audiences to not only add to their accumulation of Shakespearean cultural capital, but to practice and perform the knowledge already gained from previous encounters and experiences with Shakespeare in performance, and elsewhere.

The idea that Shakespeare plays are best experienced with some pre-existing knowledge is reflected in the fact that 77% of Rio and 39% of Maltings respondents said that they had either read the entire play or read up on the plot before watching a Shakespeare broadcast. The sense that Shakespeare spectatorship both requires and accumulates knowledge demonstrates how Shakespeare’s place in the UK

education system, and his association with cultural capital, influences reception. Respondents often mentioned education, both past and present, as reasons for attending the screening. Eight responses at the Maltings, and three at the Rio mentioned the fact that their children were studying the play at GCSE level as reasons for attending. The reciprocal, and mutually reinforcing, relationship between education and contemporary Shakespearean production, explored further in Chapter 2, and its role in the continued reproduction of Shakespeare's value is demonstrated by one respondent who cited the fact that he had 'studied [the play] at O'Level' (a qualification replaced by GCSEs in 1988) as a reason for choosing the *Macbeth* screening. Shakespeare's place in the curriculum creates an ongoing audience of students for Shakespeare performance, but this relationship also has a prolonged impact, altering how audiences continue to attend, watch, and value Shakespeare in performance.

As well as those for whom Shakespeare was a significant aspect of their experiences, many of the respondents expressed indifference about whether or not the play was by Shakespeare, saying that they would 'watch any play/performance', would 'watch any [play] if I fancy/learn' and that they simply 'enjoy the experience' regardless of the play. At the Rio the responses to the question of how important Shakespeare was were conditioned by the relatively narrow availability of theatre broadcasts, with respondents expressing that they had 'not seen other performances advertised so [have] not had other options', and that they would also be happy to watch broadcasts of plays by other writers. Those indicating that Shakespeare was not at all important in their decision-making processes again referred to 'quality' theatre, with one respondent writing that they were 'more interested in the quality of the performances and the content and the theme/ideas', and another that it was

‘most important that it’s good theatre’. Another Maltings audience member stated that the quality of the performance was the most important factor, writing that they mainly judged this beforehand ‘based on the company performing the show i.e. NT or RSC’, reflecting the idea that this was an audience who recognised prestigious, mainstream performance brands as a marker of value.

In denying that Shakespeare is a factor in their motivation to watch, these audience members do not dismiss Shakespeare as culturally unimportant. Indeed, there is a kind of recognition, and then denial of, Shakespeare’s cultural capital in these statements. Understanding Shakespeare’s position in the canon, these audiences challenge the idea that a performance of Shakespeare is inherently valuable, stating that it is secondary to a broadcast being ‘quality’ or ‘good’ theatre – something that they prejudge based on reviews or what they know about the theatre company’s reputation.

The different ways in which these audiences articulated the importance of Shakespeare in their experiences demonstrates that whilst concepts of Shakespeare’s value are complexly constructed and conferred to (UK) audiences by cultural institutions, government policy, and Shakespeare’s place in the UK education system, Shakespeare’s value is also reproduced at a micro-level by individual audience members and their multiple encounters with Shakespearean performance. Audiences have their own personal histories with Shakespeare, giving them a sense of ownership over the plays, with performance providing the pleasure of recognition, but the results also show that there was no consensus, even within these small audience groups, about the value of Shakespeare in performance. Although Shakespeare, and the play, was a motivation for some audience members, especially those attending in relation to exam preparation, attendance at these

broadcasts was rarely motivated solely by the fact that they were Shakespeare plays. Rather, the value attributed to Shakespeare intersected with other valued elements of the broadcast, including the prestige of the theatre company, the actors and production, and the localness and convenience of the venue, in order to motivate a variety of audiences to attend. Whilst the results suggest that Shakespeare broadcasts will continue to attract a substantial audience interested in attaining more cultural capital, either through formal education or personal interest, they also show a desire for broadcasts of other work, and a sense that some broadcast audiences privilege elements of the production over the play itself.

Shaping Experience: Hybridity and Community

As well as determining how audiences approached and valued their broadcast experiences the venues had an impact on how audiences engaged and participated in broadcasts. In particular, two elements of the broadcast experience emerged as particularly significant: the way in which audiences negotiated media hybridity, and the way that audiences experienced cinema broadcasts as social experiences. This section begins by exploring the degree to which audiences experienced broadcasts as cinema and theatre, before examining the way that communities of reception functioned in these encounters.

'Like the cinema but with poor sound quality'

Pascale Aebischer writes that during NT Live broadcasts 'each receiving cinema is reimagined as a satellite auditorium of the National Theatre', providing 'cognitive prompts that invite broadcast audiences to experience the receiving venue as

"theatrical"' (2018: 114-115). Whilst both screenings at the Rio and the Maltings included recognisably 'theatrical' prompts such as providing printed cast lists and holding an interval during which drinks were available to purchase, the ways in which each venue explicitly framed the broadcast for their audiences differed, altering the degree to which audiences approached and experienced the screenings as theatre. Reinforcing Keir Elam's argument that the 'perceptual framing of the event may be conditioned by its venue', reception of the screening at each venue was shaped and determined by the venue's 'micro-cultural contexts', including its programming, architecture and cultural history (Elam, 2018: 194). Additionally, the reception of the broadcasts as 'theatrical' was also dependent on the audience themselves, filtered by their interests, and their prior experiences with theatre broadcasts, live performance, and cinema.

As the ways that audiences found out about broadcasts indicate, the venue plays a significant role in shaping an audience's understanding not only of what broadcasts are available and when, but of what they are and how they might be approached as spectatorship experiences. As discussed above, at Farnham Maltings, the *Macbeth* screening was part of a wide and varied programme of event screenings including opera and art exhibitions which sit in their own category – 'screenings' – on the venue website, positioning event cinema as its own genre distinct from live theatre and film. Despite this distinction, the screening was framed as 'theatrical' in a number of ways, including the fact that it was hosted in the venue's main live performance space, a tiered auditorium in front of a stage, the technical equipment and lighting rig for which was clearly visible (see Fig. 11). Numbered seating and a steward handing out cast-lists at the entrance to the hall also added to the sense of attending a live performance.

In contrast, the Rio has a less developed event cinema programme, and NT Live appears alongside a fairly extensive programme of other 'special events' mainly focusing on one-off film screenings. The inclusion of NT Live screenings among such alternative cinematic events positions NT Live as a specialist film event, rather than a theatrical one. The framing of NT Live as a film experience at the Rio is emphasised by its status as an historic cinema building and the way in which the building's interior replicates a nostalgic cinema-going experience. Although the auditorium itself is 'theatrical' in style, with two tiers of seating and a curtain and small stage in front of the screen, the space is reminiscent of an old-style cinema attempting to replicate theatrical conventions, rather than of a theatre per se (see Fig. 10).

The alignment of NT Live screenings with specialist film at the Rio reflects the interests of the venue's audience. When asked to select three statements they most identified with from a list about relationships with culture, theatre and broadcasts, two thirds of respondents at the Rio selected 'I love film and cinema', compared to 27% who selected 'I'm a theatre enthusiast', and 20% who said 'I'm a Shakespeare lover'. Three of the ten respondents who said they loved film and cinema also said that they were theatre enthusiasts, suggesting that whilst some audiences were fans of both theatre and film, for the majority of the audience, film was their primary interest. Indeed, the results indicate that NT Live screenings at the Rio are attracting some audiences who are film fans but are not hugely familiar with theatre, with one respondent selecting 'I love film and cinema' also selecting 'I find theatre intimidating'. The second-most selected statement was 'I would like to participate more in the arts than I do at the moment' (33%), with 20% indicating that they were 'hoping to learn something', indicating that audiences at the Rio were interested in

broadening their cultural experience and increasing their knowledge of theatre through their participation in the screening.

Interestingly, reported rates of attendance at live performances over the past 12 months were about the same at both venues: 60% of Rio audiences said that they had attended a live theatre performance between 1-3 times, compared to 74% of those at the Maltings, and the percentage of respondents attending 4-6 times was almost identical (20% Rio, 22% Maltings). Just one respondent at the Maltings and two at the Rio had not attended a live performance at all in the past year. Despite similar levels of attendance, a far higher percentage of the Maltings audience identified themselves as 'theatre enthusiasts' (52%) and 'Shakespeare lovers' (48%), with a lower proportion of the audience selecting 'I would like to participate more in the arts than I do at the moment' (22%) and 'I'm hoping to learn something' (13%) than at the Rio. This suggests that theatre was a key interest and motivator for audiences at the Maltings, and that, despite similar levels of live attendance to the Rio audiences, they perceived themselves to be relatively well-involved with arts and culture, including theatre.

This audience's sense of familiarity with theatre and the arts, however, may derive not only from their recent encounters with live performance, but from their previous experiences with event cinema screenings. 35% of the Maltings audience indicated that the *Macbeth* screening was their first time attending a theatre broadcast at the venue and for 29% of respondents, it was their first time attending a theatre broadcast at any screening venue. The majority of the audience, therefore, had attended more than one theatre broadcast either at the Maltings or elsewhere. The Maltings' established programme of event cinema here seems to have created a returning audience, with the results indicating the possibility that broadcast

attendance may impact how people feel in relation to arts and culture, increasing both enthusiasm for theatre and familiarity with its conventions.

Figure 10: Interior of the Rio auditorium. Photo: Rio Cinema website.

Figure 11: Interior of Farnham Maltings' Great Hall. Google Maps screenshot.

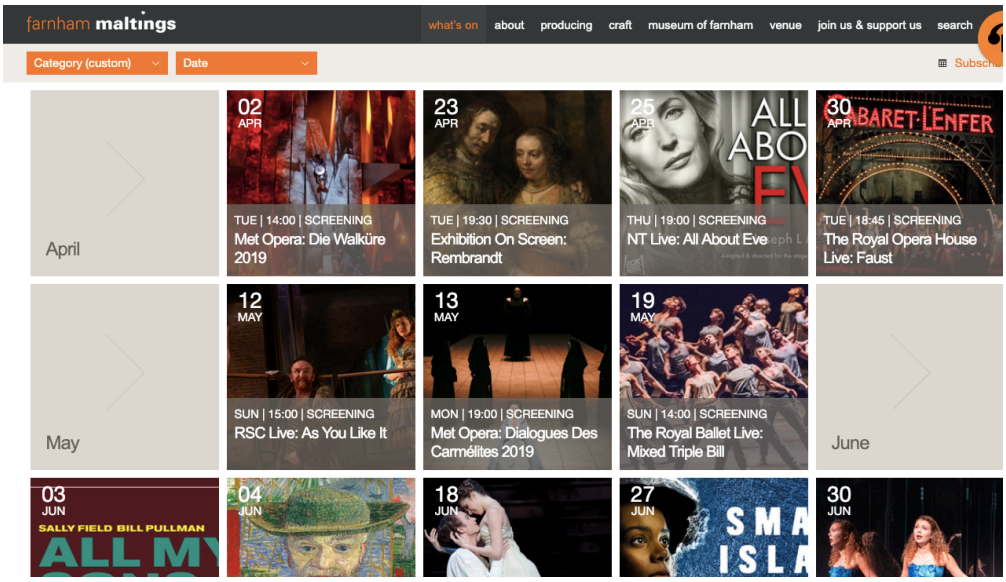

Figure 12: Farnham Maltings' screening listings on their website. Screenshot taken by the author 17 March 2019.

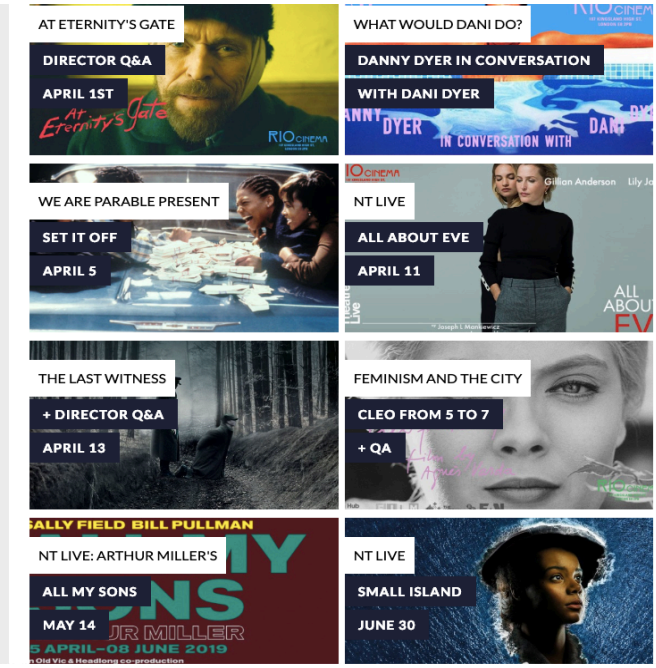

Figure 13: The Rio Cinema's special events listed on their website. Screenshot taken by the author 17 March 2019.

In comparison, 69% of respondents at the Rio said that the *Macbeth* screening was their first time watching a theatre broadcast at the venue, with 47% saying it was their first time watching in any screening venue. The relatively high number of first-attenders in both audiences is perhaps surprising given that NT Live

has now been running for a decade. In 2013, Martin Barker noted that the novelty of the experience may have shaped the results of early audience data, noting a sizable drop in how audiences rated the quality of the event between their first and second broadcast experiences. Explaining his results he posits that:

> a number of people tried the experience once and gave it the benefit of the doubt, tried it once more less enthusiastically (now having a point of comparison), and then may select themselves out. The ones who return have fallen in love with this mode of encountering theatre and opera *because of* its differences.
>
> (Barker, 2013: 30)

Barker identifies an awareness 'among those who are inclined to be most enthusiastic that new manners will need to emerge for them to be able to take part uninhibitedly', predicting that as audiences become more familiar with the form, a new mode of participation, related to, but distinct from, modes of participation with theatre and film, will arise (70). Five years on from Barker's research, my results suggest that as well as developing a core returning audience, broadcasts are continuing to attract new audiences, resulting in multiple modes of participation within one audience at a single venue.

At the Maltings there was evidence that some audience members did view and value broadcasts as a distinct genre. When asked why they attended these respondents mentioned the 'atmosphere', that they 'love feeling that the play comes alive' and that they 'just enjoy the experience', expressing an appreciation for the broadcast experience on its own terms. The majority of respondents, however, continued to articulate their experiences in relation to the theatre experience. Mostly, these comments were positive, with audiences praising not only the convenience, accessibility and lower cost of broadcasts in comparison to theatre attendance, but

suggesting that they were ‘a very good alternative to live theatre’. Echoing NT Live’s early marketing rhetoric, one Maltings audience member wrote that broadcasts are the ‘next best thing to live theatre’ but continued to say that sometimes he preferred broadcasts because of the close-ups and sound quality. Indeed, other audience members also indicated that they preferred broadcasts to live theatre. Perhaps reflecting their general interest in film, audiences at the Rio particularly appreciated the viewpoint the filming provided, with one respondent writing that it was ‘good to see the actors up close’ and another explaining:

> I like the fact that there are several cameras and so unlike being at the theatre you get to see the performance from different angles and close up.
>
> (Audience comment, Q23, Rio)

For these audience members the broadcast did not create an experience that was secondary to live theatre but actually created one that was both more intimate and more expansive than that of being in the theatre. As another Rio respondent wrote, a broadcast provides ‘the *best* view of the action’ (emphasis added), placing it above live theatre attendance as a mode of participation.

Responses to the filming of the broadcasts were not universally positive, and some audience members felt that broadcasts were lacking when compared to the theatre experience. When asked if there were any downsides or things they would change about theatre broadcast screenings, three respondents mentioned close-ups, writing that ‘close focus shots don’t replicate the theatre experience’, that focusing on one speaker meant that ‘the action by other actors is missed’ and that they would ‘prefer to see the whole stage’. Suggesting that the mechanism described

above by Barker of audiences 'selecting themselves out' of broadcast attendance is still in action, one Farnham respondent wrote:

> First one and last one. Didn't particularly like it. Not theatre - just like the cinema with poor sound quality.
>
> (Audience comment, Q20, Farnham)

Two other accounts from first-time attendees of broadcasts provide counterpoints to this experience:

> First experience. Not quite the same as being there but impressed and will come again.
>
> (Audience comment, Q23, Farnham)

> It was novel to see a broadcast of a play - very interesting.
>
> (Audience comment, Q20, Rio)

These comments demonstrate how expectations about broadcasts and how they might replicate a 'theatrical' mode of participation can alter an audience member's experience of a broadcast. Indeed, the audience responses across both venues demonstrate a kind of scale of attitudes in relation to how broadcasts compare to, and mediate, theatre experiences. On one end of this scale, and demonstrated by the first comment above, cinema broadcasts are not an acceptable compromise for the theatre experience. For these audience members the benefit of access does not outweigh the perceived downsides and they are likely not to attend again. For others, such as the second commenter above, the broadcast is still a compromise on the theatre experience but, recognising the positives of the experience, it is one they are happy to make. These audience members might also describe broadcasts as 'the next best thing' to theatre, seeing live experience as the gold standard, but

acknowledge that broadcasts offer an experience that is almost comparable to it. As described above, a small but fairly significant proportion of the audience sees broadcasts specifically as providing a better experience than live attendance. Finally, some audience members see, and appreciate, broadcasts as distinct from live theatre, enacting a mode of participation that is more or less free from comparisons to a 'theatrical' experience.

In terms of replicating a 'theatrical' experience, the inclusion of an interval is perhaps one of the most important structural aspects of a cinema broadcast. Both venues sold refreshments during the intervals and buying food and drink was the most commonly reported interval activity at the Rio (83%) and the second most common interval behaviour at the Maltings (54%). 58% of respondents at both venues said they had used the interval to chat with friends or other audience members. Just one respondent at the Rio said that they watched the interval features, and, even though some audiences expressed enthusiasm for the paratexts at the Maltings, only 29% said that they had engaged with them. Indeed, 17% of respondents at the Maltings and 8% at the Rio said that they had left the screening for the entirety of the interval. These results complicate assumptions, both in the theoretical academic literature described above and in Abbott and Read's investigation into broadcast paratexts, that the interval features are passively consumed by all cinema audience members. Although the responses contain examples of Barker's 'expert' and 'immersive' attitudes to extra material, for audiences at these screenings at least, the relatively low percentage of respondents who said they watched the interval features indicates that for most audience members they are not a significant aspect of the broadcast experience. There is also little evidence that the interval features helped shape audience reception in any

significant way. Just one respondent across both surveys explicitly mentioned the content of the paratexts, leaving a free text comment in the space given at the end of the survey saying that she 'thought [the] point at the start re. People under pressure is key, and makes Shakespeare more relevant and current'.

The results suggest that the degree to which audiences approach and experience a theatre broadcast as a 'theatrical' experience is partly determined by the screening venue and the way it frames a broadcast. The 'micro-cultural contexts' of the Rio Cinema meant that the audience were more likely to approach a broadcast in a broadly cinematic way, and at Farnham Maltings, a multi-arts venue, more likely to approach a broadcast as both theatre, and as part of a wider matrix of cultural experiences across media. As well as the way that the venues market and position themselves, the results indicate that the physical location of the venue, the audience that the venue attracts, and their relationship to live performance, also has an impact on how audiences relate to the hybridity of the experience. However, aligning the Rio with a cinematic mode of participation, and Farnham Maltings with a theatrical one, would be overly simplistic. Whilst Rio audiences might have approached broadcasts in a more filmic way, theatre was still a very important part of the experience for those audiences. Theatre broadcasts partially differentiate themselves and draw audiences through the perceived 'high-culture' status of theatre (and in this case, Shakespeare) as an art form. Watching the *Macbeth* broadcast was, for Rio audiences, part of their articulated desire to participate more in the arts, rather than another encounter with specialised film. Similarly, the mediation of theatre into a film art was a valuable part of the experience for Maltings audiences, making theatre accessible, and in some cases, enhancing the theatrical experience. Furthermore, at the Maltings there was some evidence that a returning audience were beginning to

develop their own manners of participation specifically for theatre broadcasts, seeing it as a distinct experience.

'Not part of the audience'

Having such a range of modes of participation and attitudes in one physically co-present audience group can be a source of potential tension in cinema broadcast audiences. Barker notes that uncertainty over manners of participation can alter how some audiences feel able to participate, citing a respondent who said that they had 'wanted to clap but felt a bit silly doing so' (2013: 70). Elsewhere, he quotes a respondent who, annoyed at the reserved nature of the cinema audience, writes that 'they are all so uptight and refuse to clap at the big moments and join in the experience' (32). Relationships with other audience members also emerged as a significant aspect of audience experiences at the Rio and the Maltings. For the majority of respondents broadcasts were a social event, with 78% of Maltings and 86% of Rio audiences indicating that they usually attended with one other person or a small group of friends, compared to 22% of respondents at the Maltings, and no one at the Rio, who said they usually attended alone.[26] Face-to-face interactions were important at every stage of the experience, with 61% of Maltings audiences saying they had spoken to friends about their plans to watch, and 17% saying they had met up with or had dinner with friends before watching, extending the sense of occasion. These behaviours were less common at the Rio, with 38% speaking to, or meeting, friends before a screening. 58% of audiences at both venues said they had used the interval to chat with friends or other audience members about the play, and

[26] The other options given were 'as part of an organised group or community', which was not selected at all, and 'other', which was selected by three respondents, who wrote that they attended with family.

100% of Rio respondents and 81% of those at the Maltings said that they had chatted to friends or other audience members after a screening, reflecting Susan Bennett's suggestion that '[i]n a publicly experienced cultural event, the opportunity to talk about the event is important socially' (Bennett, 2001: 165).

The concentration of post-screening interaction also reflects Bennett's argument that the '[r]eception of a performance can be prolonged by group discussion' and that post-performance acts 'have the potential to reshape initial decoding of the production' (165). Like their counterparts in the theatre, these broadcast audiences turned to those present as the preferred way of processing a production. Using social media to discuss a broadcast was much less common; just one respondent at the Rio said they had engaged with social media at all as part of a broadcast, and at the Maltings, just two respondents said that they had posted before the screening and three that they has done so during the interval. The greatest use of social media was after a broadcast at the Maltings: 29% reported having posted on social media post-screening, and 10% looked up the reaction to the screening on social media.

Although these screenings were clearly social encounters with each other as well as with the venue and the production itself, relationships with other audience members were an aspect of the cinema broadcast experience that these audiences often struggled with. Like Barker's audiences, the failure of the audience in the cinema to clap was a focus point, with an audience member at the Maltings writing that broadcasts 'miss the sense of being part of the cast/audience', adding in parenthesis that, '[t]onight the younger people spontaneously clapped - which rarely happens in an older audience'. Another said that she felt she was 'not part of the audience' because there was 'no clapping'. Clapping is one of the few moments in a

performance where an audience's mode of participation is made visible to others, and so is a key moment of community building and identification. For these audience members the lack of clapping in the cinema resulted in a sense of disconnection from other audience members.

The responses to the question of whether respondents had felt connected to other audience members during the broadcast reinforces this sense of disconnection. The majority of respondents at both venues neither agreed or disagreed (45% Maltings, 64% Rio) that they had felt a sense of connection, with a further 32% disagreeing and 5% strongly disagreeing at the Maltings, and 21% disagreeing and 7% strongly disagreeing at the Rio. Just 5 respondents across both venues either agreed or strongly agreed that they had felt connected to other audience members. Elsewhere, just two respondents across both venues mentioned 'sense of community' or 'atmosphere' as one of their main reasons for attending theatre broadcasts, with respondents more often noting the lack of such elements as a downside to the broadcast experience.

For these audiences, attending as part of a social group and even talking about the production afterwards did not necessarily translate into a sense of connection between audience members. A possible reason for this may be a lack of clarity around what it means to feel 'connected' to an audience that is fragmented across time and space. In a cinema broadcast 'the audience' is comprised of a number of groups including those in the venue, those watching in other venues, and those watching at the theatre. In these delayed screenings the audience were not only geographically, but temporally removed from audiences outside of the venue, perhaps contributing to a sense of disconnection. However, evidence that audiences also did not feel connected to audiences *at the venue* implies that this disconnect

goes beyond physical or temporal co-presence, and might be instead related to differences in modes of participation prompted by the hybridity of the experience. The high proportion of responses that neither agreed or disagreed that they felt connected suggests that audiences are still coming to terms with how to relate to the fragmented broadcast audience, and are still unsure of how community and connection functions as part of these experiences.

However, the idea that audiences did not experience these broadcasts as part of a community of reception at all is complicated by the comparatively positive responses to the question of whether respondents had 'felt part of something'. 61% of Rio respondents and 45% of Maltings audiences agreed that they had felt part of something, and a further 9% of Maltings respondents strongly agreed. Whilst there was still a high level of ambivalence to this question, with 36% of Maltings and 23% of Rio respondents neither agreeing or disagreeing, this suggests that although audiences did not feel connected to other audience members, generally they did feel as though they were participating in a communal event.[27] The apparent disparity in these responses demonstrates the complex ways that 'community' functions for audiences as part of their cinema broadcast experiences and suggests that feeling part of a community of reception does not necessarily require physical co-presence, direct communication between members of that community, or 'live', temporally simultaneous reception.

In a sense then, the communities of reception that audiences participate in during cinema broadcasts resemble what Benedict Anderson has described as 'imagined communities'. In Anderson's formulation, community is not necessarily

[27] 9% of Maltings respondents disagreed that they had felt part of something, 8% of Rio audiences disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed.

reliant on being physically co-present, or on members interacting with each other, but is imagined by those who see themselves as part of that community. Arguing that technologies of communication have made it 'possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways' (Anderson, 1983: 36), he argues that all communities, even those based on face-to-face contact, are in some way imagined (6). For Anderson the fact that communities are primarily imagined does not make them any less 'real' or powerful, and his own investigation into the rise of nationalism demonstrates that the ways in which communities are imagined can have very real and profound consequences. Whilst obviously on a much smaller scale, the responses from audiences at the Rio and the Maltings also demonstrate the strength and impact of imagined communities; the ability of audiences to imagine themselves as part of a community centred around an experience of a particular production was key to a sense of 'eventness' or feeling 'part of something', with face-to-face encounters with audiences in the cinema sometimes actually threatening, rather than reinforcing, this sense of participation and community.

Anderson writes that 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (1983: 6). The suggestion that all communities are effectively imagined into being offers a new way of conceiving of communality in theatrical reception that goes beyond the idea that communities of theatrical reception are formed by the physical co-presence of audience members. Whilst imagined communities are particularly important in cinema broadcast experiences – and, as I explore in Chapters 2 and 3, in school and online broadcast experiences – the fact that physical co-presence is troubled as the locus of community opens up the possibility that they are not unique to digital

distribution. The lack of connection felt by audiences at the Rio and the Maltings towards other audience members, and the fact that being physically present with others sometimes disrupted a sense of community cohesion, indicates that community is not simply constituted in theatrical experiences by being in the same physical space as one another. The idea that *all* theatrical communities of reception, even in live performance experiences, are in some degree imagined, is reinforced by recent debates surrounding 'theatre etiquette', which are usefully outlined and interrogated by Kirsty Sedgman in her book *The Reasonable Audience* (2019). Although it is not explicitly framed as such, Sedgman's book is essentially an exploration of the styles in which theatrical communities are imagined by audience members, and what happens when other audience members participate in ways that go against those ideas.

These imagined communities of reception are not conjured up by audience members in isolation but are informed by a range of factors including previous experiences, expectations, and values, as well as the production itself, the contexts of reception, and the wider discourse around theatre spectatorship. In cinema broadcasts ideas about community are also informed by elements of the broadcast presentation that contribute to a sense of participation and presence. Pascale Aebischer argues that 'through paratexts, camerawork and the triggering of strong affective responses broadcasts are able to generate atmospheres in which broadcast audiences experience a 'distributed presence' that transcends boundaries of time and space' (2018: 115). Comparing how different Shakespeare companies create this sense of distributed presence through their broadcast styles, Aebischer argues that NT Live's Shakespeare broadcasts 'typically deploy an illusionist form of

South Bank Shakespeare that presents the National Theatre as a transactional space which wraps remote viewers in a spatially extended atmosphere' (122).

The engagement of audiences in this atmosphere is demonstrated by the high numbers of audiences at the *Macbeth* screenings who said that they had felt 'totally absorbed' by the screening, with 67% of respondents at the Maltings agreeing and a further 25% strongly agreeing. This was broadly mirrored at the Rio where 57% agreed and 14% strongly agreed. Just one respondent at the Rio, and none at the Maltings, disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had felt totally absorbed during the production. Audiences at both venues were also more likely to mention aspects of the screening itself as reasons for attending broadcasts than the atmosphere or sense of community at the screening, suggesting that elements of the broadcast were active in creating a sense of communal participation. Audiences at the Rio particularly mentioned the camerawork and filming of the productions as reasons for attending:

> I enjoy being able to see close-ups and different angles than normally accessible from a static position.
>
> You get the best view of the action.
>
> For some performances the filming actually helps - e.g. this production of Macbeth on stage is large and sparse.
>
> (Audience comments, Q20, Rio)

For these audiences, being physically remote from the theatre allowed them to get a closer and more intimate experience of the production, something which they particularly appreciated. The idea that a broadcast actually provides a 'better' experience of the production is also evident in the Maltings responses, with one

respondent writing that ‘sometimes I prefer broadcasts because of close-up and sound quality [...] I remember parts of the action better than if live’. Comments such as this demonstrate that for some audiences broadcasts can create not only a more intense experience, but a more memorable one. Through film grammar and careful framing, audiences were able to ‘be present simultaneously in two temporalities via a shared space’ despite the fact that the broadcast was watched asynchronously (Aebischer, 2018: 117). For these audiences, the ‘strong affects’ of the broadcast production were able to overcome a lack of social connection and ‘produce the experience of spatial inclusion’ that contributed to the ‘sensation of participation in the event’ (115).

Audiences at the Maltings were less likely to mention camerawork as a positive aspect but were more likely to mention the introduction and interval features as reasons for attending. Respondents ‘appreciate[d] the extra background provided by the directors/actors involved’ and found the features ‘very enlightening’, with one going as far to say that ‘I think I benefit more than the audience at the theatre because I enjoy the insight given to me by the talks given by the production team’. Whilst Aebischer mentions paratexts as a way that broadcasts build a sense of ‘distributed presence’, the focus in these comments on their value as ways of learning about the production, and the low levels of engagement with the paratexts generally, suggests that for these audiences the broadcast paratexts were limited in this respect. Indeed, as the debates over intervals features and paratextual material demonstrate, for some audience members these features can prevent, rather than contribute to, the creation of an imagined community, highlighting difference between different modes of participation.

Alongside the ongoing discourse around audience behaviour in the theatre, the uncertainty around relationships with other audience members in these broadcast experiences calls for a reconsideration of how we approach and understand 'community' as an aspect of theatrical spectatorship. There was no real consensus about how community was experienced and valued as part of broadcasts in the responses from audiences at the Maltings and the Rio. Attending at a venue, and being co-present with others did not seem to increase the sense of community, and the presence of audience members participating in different ways even resulted in some audience members feeling disconnected from others. Regardless of this, most audience members said that they had felt 'part of something', suggesting that broadcast audiences experienced participation in imaginary 'communities of reception', even if they did not feel part of a face-to-face community. Whilst the kinds of remote communities associated with theatre broadcasts are often discussed in relation to social media, it was not a significant way of community building for these audiences, suggesting that audiences can experience a sense of community without being co-present to, or communicating with, other audience members. As I explore in further detail over the next two chapters, and especially in Chapter 3, this calls theories of theatrical spectatorship that locate value in physical co-presence and communication into question, prompting further inquiry into how audiences experience, and imagine, theatrical community.

Conclusion: Transactional Encounters

Richard Maltby suggests that New Cinema Histories are

> likely to pay more attention to questions of circulation than questions of production, questions of agency and brokerage rather than questions of authorship, to consider cinema as experiences rather than film as apparatus, and to examine the heterogeneity and social construction of cinema audiences rather than the textual construction of spectatorship.
>
> (Maltby, 2011: 34)

By flipping the focus from the production and aesthetics of Shakespeare broadcasts to the screening venues in which they are encountered, this chapter has also been able to pay attention to questions of brokerage and agency, to consider the diverse experiences that these broadcasts enable, and to highlight how cinema broadcast reception is constructed, not just by what audiences see on screen, but by the venues in which they watch, as well as their own histories, social experiences and values.

This research, undertaken at just two UK screening venues, begins to address the gap between large-scale, industry-backed audience research into theatre broadcasts, and general accounts of broadcast experiences based on anecdotal evidence or an analysis of broadcast content. It has demonstrated the importance of screening venues, not just in shaping how audiences experience broadcasts but in how they approach and value those experiences. Where Pascale Aebischer has suggested that NT Live presents the National Theatre as a ‘transactional space’, in which viewers are ‘wrapped in a spatially extended atmosphere’ with each venue 'reimagined as a satellite auditorium’ (2018: 114), this research has shown that, in practice, each screening venue is much more than an

extension of theatre space. Rather than being neutral spaces for accessing theatre, both the Rio and Farnham Maltings acted as cultural brokers or intermediaries in their own right, facilitating and shaping reception in specific and important ways. We have seen how the 'localness' of the venues was an important motivating factor for audiences, reframing their participation as an act of support. Geographical location in relation to the originating theatre was also significant, conditioning very particular approaches to ideas about the value or 'quality' of certain types of theatre experiences. Furthermore, the main activities of the venue, its architecture, and the way in which it promoted theatre screenings also shaped the degree to which audiences approached and experienced broadcasts either as theatre, film, or a genre in and of itself.

In demonstrating the impact of venues on broadcast experiences, this chapter supports Keir Elam's suggestion that such experiences are conditioned by the 'micro-cultural contexts' of screening venues. The screening venues discussed here not only mediated the transactions between the remote audience and the broadcasting theatre, but also acted as transactional spaces in and of themselves, with the audiences' interactions with the venues important aspects of their encounters. However, one of the benefits of conducting audience research, as well as building case studies of the venues, has been highlighting the importance of personal and social histories in shaping broadcast experiences. Whilst elements such as localness, ideas about quality, and approaches to hybridity can be seen as influenced by the screening venue, other aspects of the experiences, such as the way audiences valued Shakespeare, and how they experienced a sense of community and participation, were based more on individual experiences and personal circumstances.

That these elements were reliant on individual negotiations of past experiences and value is reflected in the fact that there was less of a consensus about both Shakespeare and community from these audiences. Whilst Shakespeare did influence how some audiences approached, experienced and valued these screenings, finding pleasure in familiarity and in the accumulation of more Shakespearean cultural capital, and watching for education or self-development, Shakespeare was rarely the most important motivation for these audiences. Instead, Shakespeare was just one of a number of elements which audiences negotiated as part of their experiences, destabilising Shakespeare as the key locus of value in Shakespeare cinema broadcasts. Similarly, there was a lack of agreement around ideas of community and communal participation, troubling the idea that cinema broadcasts are particularly valuable because they involve physical co-presence between audience members. Again, ideas about community tended to depend on individual ideas about theatre spectatorship, with some audience members dismayed when confronted with other audience members who participated in different ways than imagined. These findings suggest that a sense of 'community' goes beyond physical co-presence, raising further questions about how communities of reception are imagined in theatrical experiences.

This chapter has shown that the audiences at the Rio and the Maltings were not passive receivers of theatrical content; rather, they were engaged in multiple transactions and negotiations between the broadcast itself, the venue, and their own experiences and values, which defined their experiences with Shakespeare broadcasts. The multiple factors involved in cinema broadcast spectatorship mean that there are multiple ways of participating, even within the same venue. As Martin Barker predicted, 'new manners of participation' have emerged alongside cinema

broadcasts, but there is still no consensus over what these might be, with multiple modes of participation in one audience still causing uncertainty over aspects such as the interval features and clapping. Moreover, this research indicates that cinema broadcasts continue to attract new audiences as well as those now familiar with the form, suggesting that difference might be an enduring feature of cinema broadcast reception.

The multiple possible ways of participating in cinema broadcasts both within and across venues pose a challenge to Michael D. Friedman's suggestion that cinema broadcasts have the potential to alter the idea that watching Shakespeare in performance is an 'elite activity' (2016: 480). Looking closely at reception in venues demonstrates that, at least for now, the role that cinema broadcasts have in the continued circulation of Shakespeare's cultural capital is complicated by the way that both venues and individual audience members are active agents in shaping and determining value. Whilst the Rio's positioning of NT Live, along with an audience invested in film and cinema, meant that there was some evidence that Shakespeare was being viewed as less 'elite', responses at the Maltings show that audiences clearly associated NT Live (and Shakespeare) with 'high quality' performance, potentially reinforcing traditional distinctions between 'high' and 'low' forms of culture, as well as between London and regional theatre. Although the primary focus of this chapter is audience experience, findings such as this have potential implications for screening venues. This small case study presents the possibility that, whilst theatre broadcasts may not cannibalise audiences for live theatre, they might be contributing to the development of different audiences for screenings and other art forms at regional cultural centres.

It was notable how positive respondents were about their broadcast experiences across both venues. A number of respondents expressed a desire for either more, or more frequent, showings, with one respondent explaining that 'without these broadcasts I would not see the productions, keep them coming'. As well as being important to audiences, broadcasts to cinemas are positive for venues: whilst there were some signs that broadcasts were dividing audiences at the Maltings along lines of value, they also attracted paying audiences who might otherwise have travelled to London to see theatre. The multiple benefits of cinema broadcasts to audiences, venues and broadcasting theatres indicate that despite other, potentially more convenient, forms of theatre broadcast being available, theatres will continue to use the cinema network to distribute theatre, and audiences will continue to attend, and appreciate their encounters with Shakespeare and other kinds of theatre in the cinema. For these theatre companies and audiences, the cinema has become an established and (mostly) accepted 'right time and place' for watching theatre.

Over the past decade, however, theatre broadcasting has also expanded outside of these accepted times and places. In the rest of this thesis I move beyond the cinema to explore what happens when Shakespeare is encountered in spaces that are not specifically designed for watching screens, looking at how other kinds of 'micro-cultural contexts' are shaping the reception of Shakespeare in performance and putting further pressure on the central tenets of theatrical spectatorship. The next chapter examines the use of broadcasting in schools, specifically focusing on the RSC School's Broadcast programme to further interrogate the relationships between education, spectatorship, and Shakespeare's value. The final chapter then focuses on online encounters with Shakespeare productions, exploring the different

modes of participating with, and valuing, theatre and Shakespeare enabled by online streaming.

Chapter 2 - Encounters in the Classroom: Shakespeare Broadcasts in Schools

The school has long been a site of early encounters with Shakespeare. Shakespeare was the only named author for required study on the first National Curriculum for English in 1989, and the study of Shakespeare's plays remains a National Curriculum requirement in England across both Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) and Key Stage 4 (ages 14-16).[28] The formalisation of Shakespeare as a staple feature of primary and secondary education has meant that the school is where most children in England meet Shakespeare for the first time. As well as encountering Shakespeare on the page, their learning is likely to have been supplemented with screen adaptations of the plays, as well as potentially by specialist productions performed in their schools by educational touring companies, and by school trips to the theatre. Responding to the demand for teaching resources, theatres have worked to forge relationships with schools and most major UK theatres now have significant education departments that provide workshops, resources, special school performances, and teacher training, all aimed at engaging school audiences.

The development of digital broadcast technology has opened up new ways for these theatres to engage with school audiences. Some companies have repurposed recordings of broadcasts originally created for wider consumption in cinemas or online to provide access to schools on an 'on-demand' basis. The 'National Theatre. On Demand. In Schools' (NT On Demand) scheme, for example, was launched in 2015 and gives registered teachers in the UK free-of-charge access to a number of

[28] See Department for Education (2014).

'curriculum-linked' NT Live productions via an online platform. Similarly, Cheek by Jowl provides teachers and researchers with free access to recordings of *Measure for Measure* (2015) and *The Winter's Tale* (2016), both originally broadcast online, via private YouTube and Vimeo links. These productions can be watched at any time, and access is provided alongside integrated education packs, which provide interviews, plot descriptions, historical context, and suggestions for activities that contain hyperlinks to specific moments in the recording.

In providing on-demand access, these projects mirror commercial platforms such as Digital Theatre Plus (DT+) which has made professionally-made recordings of theatre productions available for an educational market via a subscription model since 2009. Unlike DT+, NT On Demand and Cheek by Jowl's education packs, which decouple broadcast recordings from liveness and ephemerality, the RSC's Schools' Broadcast programme, which was first launched as 'Young Shakespeare Nation' in 2013, seeks to create a large, temporally synchronous audience by restricting the availability of their online streams to the duration of a given morning. Participating schools are unable to pause, fast forward or rewind the stream, meaning that, although the production itself is pre-recorded, it is experienced as a live and unrepeatable event. The sense of eventness is heightened by the inclusion of live and interactive elements around the production, including Q&A sections during which a presenter, actors and RSC practitioners engage with questions sent in via email and social media by the remote school audience.

Pascale Aebischer notes that the provision of on-demand recordings for schools represents a step away from the 'previous emphasis on liveness and ephemerality' in the marketing of projects such as NT Live (2018: 129). It is revealing that NT Live are willing to compromise on their stated commitment to preserving the

live, communal experience through big screen exhibition in order to extend access for educational use. Distribution to schools, it seems, represents an exception to the idea articulated in the *Beyond Live* report that there is a ‘’right time’ (live, as it happens) and a ‘right place’ (a cultural venue, whether a theatre or a cinema) to enjoy some cultural experiences’ (NESTA, 2011: 6). Watching a Shakespeare performance within a school is perceived and positioned as significantly different from watching in cinemas or online: ‘educational use’ is worth sacrificing the ‘liveness’ that NT Live sees as so central to the audience experience elsewhere.

The idea that the school is an exceptional, and somewhat ambiguous, site of reception is reflected in UK copyright laws governing the use of media within schools. Provided that it is watched as part of the curriculum, and that the audience is limited to ‘teachers, pupils, and others directly connected to the curriculum activities of the establishment’, an educational exemption means that no copyright licence is required for showing all, or part of, a film or recording in a lesson (Copyright and Schools). If, however, films or recordings are screened for extra-curricular reasons, they count as ‘public performances’, and require a licence. Within schools, the line between watching for work and watching for pleasure is one that is clearly and legally defined. This has fewer ramifications for the RSC, who have rights agreements in place allowing them to use and reproduce their broadcasts in perpetuity, but more for NT Live, who do not. This is reflected in the different forms that their educational broadcast projects take; whilst the RSC’s broadcasts resemble something akin to a ‘public performance’, NT On Demand is positioned as an educational resource, with productions only available to stream whilst on school premises ‘for the purposes of education’ only.

In practice, the distinction between education and enjoyment is not so clear cut. In this chapter I draw on observations of RSC Schools' Broadcasts in two different UK schools to investigate the kind of spectatorship experiences these broadcasts constitute. Through these observations the school emerges as a distinct site of encounter with the Shakespearean theatre broadcast in which the sometimes competing purposes of school and theatre, education and entertainment, teacher and student, create particular and multiple modes of spectatorship. Indeed, I argue that, through their schools' broadcasts, the RSC creates an experience that is deliberate in its merging of education with entertainment, and explore what might be at stake in such an approach.

These broadcasts operate in complex theatrical and educational landscapes, motivated and enabled by a mix of circumstances and objectives that are both political and economic in nature. Susan Bennett argues that such projects are primarily motivated by a commercial need to develop future audiences for Shakespearean theatre, describing the RSC Schools' Broadcasts and NT On Demand as 'an exercise in lifelong brand recognition' (Bennett, 2018: 52). Bennett writes that 'for theatre to thrive, on stage and on screen, a sufficient percentage of the occupants of today's classrooms must become tomorrow's paying audiences' (53). Bringing theatre broadcasts into schools, she suggests, is a convenient way of trying to reach young audiences in the hope that this exposure will make them more likely to seek theatre out as adults. As well as long-term goals, however, school broadcasts can also be seen as responding to more immediate pressures on theatre companies by funding bodies to increase access and widen participation in their work, with the re-use of broadcasts being a relatively efficient way of reaching large numbers of students.

Bennett's focus is on the motivations of theatre companies, but the educational market and the motivations of schools are equally important for understanding school broadcasts and the experiences they create. As well as lining up with the curriculum, broadcasts also respond to the significant pressure on state-funded schools in England to tighten budgets, which has made schools especially receptive to free experiences, opportunities, and resources. The absence of funding to take students on trips to the theatre, the widespread availability of screening technology in schools, and the increased quality of broadcasts all mean that filmed theatre and school broadcast schemes can be seen as a convenient, cheaper, and acceptable substitute for live attendance. Such an attitude is a controversial one; negative reaction to the announcements by two major exam boards in 2016 that they were removing the requirement to attend a live performance from their GCSE drama syllabi ultimately resulted in them both reviewing the decision.[29] Whilst there is obviously a strength of feeling around replacing live attendance with filmed experiences, the popularity of programmes such as the RSC's Schools' Broadcasts shows that there is an appetite for such experiences in schools.

The needs and motivations of schools are also important in shaping how school broadcasts are presented by theatre companies. Such projects may

[29] It was reported by *The Stage* in April 2016 that major exam boards AQA and OCR were removing the requirement for students to attend a live performance as part of their course (Hutchison, 2016). Both exam boards have since altered their specifications for GCSE Drama. AQA's GCSE Drama specification now states that students certificating after 1 January 2019 'are required to experience live performance – in which they are a member of the audience in the same performance spaces as the performers' (AQA, 2019: 15). OCR's specification has slightly more flexibility stating that centres '**must** take reasonable steps to ensure that all students experience live performance, where they are a member of the audience in the same performance spaces as the performers' during the course of their study (OCR, 2018: 47). Both specifications do still allow students to answer the components of the exams in which they respond to live performance by referring to a production they have seen through a recording or digital stream.

represent a form of deferred marketing to future audiences, but they must appeal to schools, and to teachers in particular, in the first instance. Teachers must therefore be able to see the value – often, but not always straightforwardly, educational – in a Shakespeare broadcast in order to justify the time taken in a tightly-packed curriculum to participate. As I explore below, the inclusion of teaching resources and live Q&A segments are often designed to add educational value to a broadcast, but theatres must tread a fine line between providing educational content, often designed to aid analysis of the play as text, and marketing the theatrical experience to students. Moreover, whilst theatre companies may seek to determine how their broadcasts are used in schools, they only have a certain degree of control over how streamed productions are framed, introduced and ultimately experienced. In drawing on observations of broadcasts at their point of reception in schools, this chapter seeks to advance the conversation around school broadcasts by considering the motivations of theatre companies alongside the ways in which they are actually experienced. If, as Bennett argues, the intended function of these broadcasts is to create future audiences for Shakespearean theatre then looking at how they actually play out in schools helps to answer further questions about what kinds of audiences they might be developing, and what they might be teaching young audiences about the value of theatre, spectatorship, and Shakespeare.

Focusing on reception also prompts a consideration of the ways in which these experiences are valued beyond the creation of future audiences. Schools and students value these broadcasts differently to theatre companies, both in terms of educational and entertainment value. Even for stakeholders, the school audience can also be seen as valuable in and of itself, with the RSC Schools' Broadcasts attracting corporate sponsorship from Virgin Media, as well as from philanthropic

foundations. Although Virgin Media's branding is not made overtly obvious during the broadcasts, their involvement suggests that the broadcasts offer the opportunity for the company to associate themselves with a prestigious arts brand and outreach project, as well as potentially engaging in the kind of 'lifelong brand recognition' that Bennett identifies. Whilst acknowledging that such projects are underpinned by a genuine desire to create useful tools with which to teach Shakespeare, critics including Courtney Lehmann and Geoffrey Way (2017) are sceptical of these burgeoning relationships between business and Shakespeare education, arguing that these projects position young audiences in relation to a complex set of commercial transactions, implicating them as part of a neoliberal agenda in which they have little option but to participate.

The different ways in which school broadcasts, and the RSC Schools' Broadcasts in particular, attempt to position their audiences is a key concern of this chapter. The research discussed here illuminates how schools represent multiple and diverse sites of reception within which different kinds of control and agency are exerted and resisted, not only by theatre companies and their sponsors from afar, but by teachers, school structures, and the students themselves, at the point of reception. The observational accounts of two RSC Schools' Broadcasts below demonstrate the ways in which these forces can converge to create very different experiences from production to production and from school to school.

Drawing evidence from the observations together with critical work on Shakespeare and education, I explore three defining aspects of RSC Schools' Broadcast reception. The first section examines in detail the way that the educational and the theatrical converge in the broadcasts, looking at how this distinction played out in each school. I interrogate how the attitude that watching Shakespeare

constitutes ‘work’ rather than ‘leisure’ is formalised through Shakespeare’s canonised place in the English education system and explore how the RSC’s own approach to Shakespeare in schools, both generally and in the broadcasts, seeks to challenge the idea that Shakespeare is ‘work’, whilst also paradoxically relying on his continued position as a set author for study and exams. Through this discussion, the teacher emerges as a key figure in shaping how students experience the broadcasts, a role that is explored further in the second section, which focuses on how RSC Education, teachers, and students all sought to exert agency and control over broadcast reception. I explore the measures that RSC Education took to frame and control reception, the role(s) of the teacher as editor, censor, gatekeeper, interpreter, and steward, during the broadcast, and question how students were positioned as audience members in relation to these forms of control.

Whilst the section demonstrates how little agency students themselves have in determining how they watch and value Shakespeare in these encounters, the use of social media represents a potential space for students to exert their own agency, with the RSC encouraging students to send in questions via Twitter to be included in the live Q&As. The final section interrogates the digital and physical communities of reception at play in these broadcasts, looking in detail at the way in which students and teachers used Twitter. Whilst the RSC outwardly appear to be fostering a two-way conversation, I highlight the ways in which this conversation is controlled and curated, mediated by teachers and the RSC. I examine what is at stake in the creation of this wider, digital audience, and challenge the idea that it necessarily represents a space for students to respond or react to productions that is free from the power structures of the classroom.

This chapter intersects with overarching questions about control, agency and attention in digital reception as well as about how communities of reception function across time and space. Additionally, by looking at how some of the earliest encounters that students might have with Shakespeare performance occur at the point of reception, it provides insight into how ideas about Shakespearean spectatorship are taught, formed and valued, and illuminates the ways in which theatres, teachers and schools are invested in reproducing these models of value. Emphasising the importance of researching these broadcasts at the point of reception, the chapter concludes by reflecting on the implications of the RSC Schools' Broadcasts in terms of what they convey to pupils, or 'future audiences', about watching, and valuing, Shakespeare in performance, and considers the relationship this might have with how Shakespeare in performance is received now and in the future.

Observing two RSC Schools' Broadcasts

I observed two consecutive RSC Schools' Broadcasts at two UK schools in spring 2018: *Twelfth Night* at Sir Harry Smith Community College (SHS) in Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire on 8th March, followed by *Macbeth* at Kensington Aldridge Academy (KAA) in West London on the 26th April. Both schools are state-funded secondaries but are situated in very different areas of England, with the broadcasts at each school being shown to different age groups for different purposes, providing two quite different examples of the experiences that these broadcasts can enable.

Observing the broadcasts at the point of reception was a good way to get a sense of how the broadcasts were shaped by the RSC, by teachers, and by the

school environment, as well as how students responded and reacted to the broadcast as spectators. The nature of the school as a site of reception lent itself to observation; the lights were never fully darkened and the spectatorship was sometimes physically active and noisy, with teachers and students moving around and often verbally intervening during the streams. This meant that I was able to gain a good amount of information about these experiences without undertaking further surveys or interviews, which would have been potentially disruptive of the broadcast process, taken further time away from the school day, and, due to the strict ethics requirements surrounding undertaking research with participants under the age of 18, required written permission from parents. Both observations began when I was met by the teachers before the beginning of the school day, and ended after the students were dismissed, providing the opportunity to consider how the time around the broadcast production influenced reception. As the two observations demonstrate, what happens in these moments when students are *not* watching the screen are just as important to their experiences as what happens when they are watching it.

In what follows, I present narrative accounts of each observation compiled from handwritten notes taken during and after the broadcasts and information gathered from speaking to teachers via email and on the day. The analysis that follows also draws on the teacher's packs and materials provided by the RSC to schools, and tweets sent during the broadcasts by RSC Education, teachers, and students. These accounts are necessarily subjective and are shaped by my own perceptions, interests, and research questions as well as my physical position in relation to the students. In both cases, my access to the screening was enabled and guided via the teachers taking the lead in organising the broadcasts, both of whom had senior roles in their respective English departments. As well as providing

information about the aims of the broadcast and the students participating, and providing access to the materials sent to them by the RSC, these teachers also became important parts of my observation, as they played a significant role in framing the production and mediating the behaviour of the students. I was not introduced to the students at either school and my interaction with students at both screenings was minimal. During the broadcasts I sat amongst the students, sitting behind both groups so as to be able to observe the most amount of students whilst also minimising my presence as a researcher, and mostly, I was completely ignored by the students who did not directly question what I was doing there.

As well as being necessarily subjective, the data collected here through observation is neither large or representative enough to produce generalisations about the audience for the RSC Schools' Broadcasts. These two schools represent a very small percentage of the total school audience and the data collected cannot tell us how reception might differ between different types of school such as primary schools, special educational needs schools, or independent schools. It is important to note at the outset, therefore, that it is not an aim of this chapter to characterise the school audience as a whole. Indeed, one of the insights from observing at two schools which were ostensibly quite similar, is how much reception can differ across schools depending on a variety of factors including the ages, size and abilities of the group, the reception space, and the reasons for participating in the broadcast, as well as on the play and the production.

Twelfth Night *at Sir Harry Smith Community College - 8th March 2018*

Sir Harry Smith Community College (SHS) is a co-educational state-funded secondary school in Whittlesey, a small town in north Cambridgeshire. The school teaches students from the age of 11 to 18, and has the highest percentage of students on free school meals in the area. Students are taught one Shakespeare play in Key Stage 3 English (aged 11-14) to prepare them for the study of another play in Key Stage 4 (aged 14-16) for their English GCSE examinations. Shakespeare is also taught at A-Level for those students who choose to continue their English literature education. Live performance is not an integral part of the teaching of Shakespeare at the school, with teachers using audio recordings and sometimes DVD recordings or films to introduce students to the text, especially in classes of lower ability. However, opportunities for students to see live performance at the school are sometimes available, with some of the Year 9 (aged 13-14) students having recently watched a touring company perform *Romeo and Juliet* at the school. The majority of students have little to no experience of performance outside of school. The nearest theatre is the Key Theatre, a twenty minute drive away in Peterborough, but as the teacher explained, many of the students rarely travel outside of Whittlesey. A group of English teachers at the school explained to me that they often struggle to attend theatre as much as they would like themselves because they have to travel to Peterborough or Cambridge in order to do so, making weeknight trips difficult. As well as distance and willingness to attend, cost is also a barrier to live performance experiences for students at the school. Although teachers work hard to organise theatre trips to theatre and musicals, uptake is often low due to the cost of travel and tickets. The teachers explained to me that one upcoming trip

to the Globe to see *Othello* would cost £45 per student, a price that meant uptake was too low to organise a minibus to London.

For SHS, the RSC Schools' Broadcasts present opportunities to introduce live performance, and Shakespeare, to students who may otherwise have few chances to experience it, negating the barriers of distance and cost. The broadcasts are organised at the school by the deputy head of English, and the school had previously participated in the RSC Schools' Broadcast of *Julius Caesar*. The *Twelfth Night* broadcast was not linked directly to any curriculum work, and rather than being for a certain year group or class, 55 students were invited to the screening from across Key Stage 3 (aged 11-14). Those selected were a mixture of students identified as gifted and talented in English, students who had recently shown outstanding effort in English classes, and members of the school's 'Friday Shakespeare Club'. The group was therefore mixed in age, ability and enthusiasm, and in students' prior knowledge of Shakespeare and performance. Some of the students present had also attended the broadcast of *Julius Caesar* and were therefore familiar with the screening format.

The broadcast was both an opportunity to reward students' efforts and a way of providing extra opportunities for high achieving students, and this was reflected in the fairly relaxed atmosphere set up for the broadcast and the activities that surrounded it. The students were 'off-timetable' and were told in advance that they could bring snacks, setting the broadcast up as an experience outside of usual school routine. The broadcast took place in the school's 'Learning Resource Centre', a large hall space functioning as part-library, part-IT suite, part-common room, with movable school chairs set up in rows facing a pull-down screen onto which the broadcast was projected. The broadcast itself was accessed via a unique link emailed to the teacher, which opened a special web page containing an embedded

YouTube Live video. As the students filtered in from around 8.30am, trailers played on the screen, which were then replaced with a holding screen that played music and showed a countdown clock, building up anticipation for the screening. It was necessary for the teacher to intervene in this anticipation, as the music was muted in order for a register to be taken. Fewer than the 55 invited students were actually in attendance as the screening clashed with an externally organised Maths Challenge, in which some of the students were taking part.

Still with the broadcast music muted, the teacher initiated an activity that was taken from the broadcast guide provided by the RSC and designed to introduce students to the play. The guide, which is a distillation of the 'Teacher's Pack' created to support the 2017 RSC production of *Twelfth Night*, stresses that it is essential students are pre-prepared in order to have a positive experience of the broadcast, and suggests that students undertake a series of activities the day before the broadcast to help them understand the plot, characters and basic context of the play.[30] For a play not directly linked to the curriculum and with a group of students from different year groups, it is only possible to devote the four lessons on the day of the broadcast to preparing for and watching the play at SHS, leaving only twenty minutes before the broadcast to introduce students to plot and character. Working in groups, students were given either a short scene from the play or a character description, asked to discuss or act out what was on their section, and to feed back to the whole group. The activity worked to sketch out the main characters and basic plot of the play, but ran over the first part of the live introduction to the broadcast,

[30] The teacher's pack for the broadcast was supplied by the teacher and is not publicly available. The teacher's pack for the 2017 production is available on the RSC website at https://www.rsc.org.uk/twelfth-night/education (Accessed: 16 September 2019).

which included presenter Ayo Akinwolere (a former presenter of popular and long-running BBC children's TV show *Blue Peter)* introducing Sophie Hobson, an RSC Education practitioner, and Matthew Dann, the Assistant Director of the production. The activity finished in time for the students to tune in to a specially created animation that ran through the plot of the play, which was followed by an introduction of the characters including photos that focused on the costumes that the characters would be wearing so that students could identify and understand the various gender swaps in order to follow the plot. The introductory material also included an explanation about production decisions, especially focusing on the reasoning behind the Victorian setting, and for opening the production with the shipwreck scene rather than with Orsino's famous lines.

The screening itself was split into three sections of around one hour with two fifteen-minute breaks. The lights were dimmed as part one began although, as a multipurpose space where other people continued to work, the degree to which lighting could be controlled was minimal, and the students were not in complete darkness. Despite it being 9am, the students began eating their snacks as soon as the first part of the play started, and, taking full opportunity of the permission to eat sweets and junk food not usually allowed on school premises, continued eating throughout the screening, meaning that the soundtrack was accompanied by the constant sound of rustling food wrappers. The students were sat mostly in friendship groups and with those from their own year groups. There was some chatting, but they mostly appeared focused on the production. The teacher sat at a table behind the students, marking papers as she watched, but provided interventions and commentary at key points. When Viola (Dinita Gohil) appeared in disguise as Cesario, the teacher spoke over the production to clarify that the character was

actually Viola, prompting them to ‘remember they all think she’s a man’. Such interventions worked as a running commentary of the plot throughout, and ensured that students did not get lost or confused.

In the first part of the production the students’ reaction to moments of intended comedy often differed from that of the filmed audience, with the laughter on screen not always mirrored by the student audience. Whilst a loud fart from Sir Toby Belch (John Hodgkinson) prompted laughter from the (mainly adult) theatre audience, it was met with stony silence by the students. They did, however, find the physical comedy from the actor playing Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Michael Cochrane) absolutely hilarious, responding verbally by talking to each other about the drunken song scene, and particularly laughing at Sir Andrew falling over and passing out drunk at the end of the scene. The music in this scene, and throughout the production, provoked movement and talking, with some students even moving seats and dancing. Malvolio’s ‘my masters, are you mad?’ was met with laughter and a few shouts of ‘YES!’ from the audience. Generally, the students felt able to react physically and verbally to the production and mostly this behaviour was not curbed by the teacher, apart from occassional shushing signalling that students should re-focus on the production.

The transition into the first break and Q&A was very abrupt and there was no time for applause, which took one student whose instinct was to clap by surprise. Students were encouraged by the teacher to watch a short live Q&A session in which the music in the production was discussed, and were encouraged by Akinwolere to tweet about the show before a break in the stream. Going against usual rules about mobile phone use at school, the teacher also encouraged the students to tweet, and a few attempted to do so, although a question from one

student to the teacher – ‘do you get how Twitter works?’ – and her answer that she did not, indicated that this was not a familiar mode of communication to either students or teachers. A feature was shown on screen during the break, but this was eclipsed by the arrival of more snacks provided by the school, and the resulting commotion meant that no attention was paid to this, with the students talking over the beginning of part two.

Students took much more time to settle into watching the second part, with a lot of direction for quiet from the teacher, and a request for students to put their phones away unless they were tweeting about the play. The break also initiated a change in where students were sitting, with some students sitting or lying on the floor in front of the seats. The decision to stage a kiss between Orsino and Cesario in the second part of the play provoked a huge reaction from the students, generating gasps and a number of wolf-whistles. A few students at the back turned around to seek clarification about the nature of the kiss from the teacher, who confirmed that this was an addition by the director, and that Orsino still thought Cesario was a boy, prompting them to ask directly whether or not Orsino was gay. At this point the teacher focused attention back onto the production, leaving the students to interpret the meaning of the moment for themselves.

The students also responded loudly to the gulling scene, which derived a lot of its comedy from the character’s interaction with a number of statues on stage. This comedy was enhanced by the camerawork, which slowly revealed Sir Andrew cupping one statue’s penis and Toby Belch tweaking another’s nipple. The production’s choices in regard to the sexualities and gender identities of the characters provoked a lot of interest from the students throughout the play, and although this interest was also mirrored in the Twitter conversation, especially in

comments from older students, the live Q&A in the second break with the actors playing Viola (Dinita Gohil) and Orsino (Nicholas Bishop) mostly avoided discussing this in any detail. The questions chosen showed clearly the challenge of appealing to a wide range of age groups. Questions were often fairly simplistic and focused on plot and character motivation – 'Why was Viola on the ship?' 'Why doesn't Olivia love Orsino?' – and although the students were initially focused on the Q&A, their attention began to slip as they became bored by questions like 'Why is Malvolio so grumpy?' which they clearly had little interest in.

Figure 14: Sarah Twomey as Fabia, Adrian Edmonson as Malvolio and John Hodgkinson as Sir Toby Belch in the 'gulling' scene of *Twelfth Night* (2017) dir. Christopher Luscombe. Photo by Manuel Harlan © RSC.

The students were focused on the feature at the end of the second break in which Sophie Hobson and Matthew Dann pointed out some things that they should be looking out for in the final part of the play, including the change of tone and the

treatment of Malvolio. Despite this extra direction, the students' focus began to wane during the third part of the play, as they chatted among themselves. The teacher made a number of interventions during the final scenes of the play to explain the complex identity mix-ups, and whilst students were chatty, they seemed to be talking mostly about the play, with some delayed laughter at moments that suggested to me that they were making their own jokes about the play, rather than always responding directly to it. Again, the end of the play transitioned rather abruptly into another Q&A session, leaving no time for applause. The students chose to ignore this, and clapped over the beginning of a 20-minute question and answer session, which they were encouraged to focus on by the teacher, although, perhaps understandably after watching a three-hour play, only gave this partial attention. The exceptions to this were students who had tweeted in questions and were eagerly waiting for them to come up. There was real disappointment when their questions did not get chosen, with one student exclaiming that he had 'tweeted 11 things!'. The same student was particularly outraged when a question similar to one he had tweeted was read out. As the Q&A ended and the credits rolled showing the names of all participating schools. The students watched this intently, giving a massive cheer when they saw the name of their school.

Post-screening, the teacher asked the students to move the chairs to the side of the room and to sit in a large circle, introducing an activity that she explained would help them to approach a play, understand characters, and write about the language. She distributed a hand-out with a speech from the play on and asked students to read it aloud around the circle, with one student offering an emotion, and the next applying that emotion to their reading of the line. They then split into groups and were asked to decide on the emotion of the speech as a whole and to work on a

short performance of the speech with that emotion in mind. A few of the groups were asked to perform their interpretations, with the others giving feedback. The students performed confidently, and there were a number of varied interpretations of the speech that did not seem to be overly determined by the production they had just seen. Before dismissing the students for lunch, the teacher ended by asking the students what they had enjoyed about the broadcast. Their answers ranged from parts of the production, 'the part with the statue', 'yellow stockings', to the experience itself: 'eating food'.

Macbeth *at Kensington Aldridge Academy - 26th April 2018*

Kensington Aldridge Academy (KAA) is an academy school based in Kensington, West London. The co-educational school, which receives its funding directly from the government, opened in September 2014 and at the time of the screening had 960 students from Year 7 to Year 10, and a sixth form. Year 10 were the school's founding year group, sitting the school's first GCSE's in 2019. Despite not yet having any GCSE results, the school is recognised as one of the top academies in the UK, and has particular strengths in English, History, French, Drama and RE with 80% of A-Level students attaining A*-C's in those subjects. The school is a performing and creative arts specialist academy, working in partnership with the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA) to develop their Drama curriculum, and, making the most of their proximity to west London theatres, providing opportunities for trips to The Lyric in Hammersmith and the Royal Court. Despite the provision of these opportunities, the teacher organising the broadcast informed me that many of the students attending the school will never have been to a live theatre performance.

The school serves a diverse population, and upwards of 60% of the students are on 'Pupil Premium', the government grants given to schools designed to help support those students identified as the most disadvantaged. Cost remains a barrier to live performance experiences outside of school, despite the location of the school in relation to a number of theatres in west and central London.

This was the first time that the school had participated in an RSC Schools' Broadcast, and the screening was for 180 Year 10 students who had just begun studying *Macbeth* as part of their English GCSE preparation. The screening was therefore directly relevant to their curriculum work, specifically Paper 1 of the AQA GCSE English specification, which asks students to write in detail about an extract from a Shakespeare play, and to write about the play as a whole (AQA, 2014: 8). The students had therefore all read the play and looked at Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and the witches in class before the screening. The school did not use any of the provided preparation materials from the RSC before, during or after the screening.

Although the school was built with state-of-the-art facilities with a special focus on sports, technology and the performing arts, its location next to Grenfell Tower meant that the entire school was forced to relocate to temporary accommodation after the tragic fire in 2017. The temporary school was built from Portakabins and erected over 12 weeks in the summer of 2017 on a site near to Wormwood Scrubs prison, and contained no space large enough for 180 students to watch a screening together (See Sherwood, 2017). The broadcast therefore took place in the theatre auditorium of a school directly adjacent to the temporary site, which was a purpose-built auditorium with raked seating, a stage, technical booth, and projector screen. Students were familiar with using this space for assemblies and other group events, and were instructed to line up in the playground of their

school, before being walked across to the auditorium in form groups. As the students entered the space, they were directed towards specific seats and were instructed to take them in silence, with an assistant head teacher immediately relocating students who spoke. Behaviour was further controlled by the strategic placement of teachers within the audience, who separated students they felt might cause disruption if sitting together.

When all the students were assembled, another Assistant Head gave an introduction to the production, talking over the muted introduction provided by the RSC. His enthusiastic introduction emphasised that this was the first time the school had participated and that it would be a valuable opportunity for the students that would help them with their GCSE exams. He also emphasised the liveness of the broadcast, and the specialness of participating alongside students across the country, framing the experience as a particular privilege. He explained the importance of watching the play rather than just reading it and advised them not to worry about understanding every word. Another member of the senior leadership team then set out clear expectations for behaviour which included not using mobile phones at any point, not eating, not talking, and not moving during the breaks. At this point the live introduction was unmuted to Akin Akinwolere explaining that this was the RSC's biggest schools' broadcast to date, followed by an introduction by RSC Education practitioner Sophie Hobson to the main plot points and characters. Because of the nature of the production, this screening was recommended for secondary schools only; this was reflected in the pitch of the introductory materials and the in-depth discussion of the production decisions by Assistant Director Peter Bradley.

As the space was purpose-built for performance events, the conditions for watching the screening were fairly good, with the auditorium in relative, but not total, darkness. Throughout part one there were always six or seven teachers distributed around the room working to focus the students and shut down any disruptive behaviour. There was some laughter at Lady Macbeth's 'unsex me here' speech, and at the Porter's performance, but otherwise the audience remained relatively silent for the first section and there were no verbal interventions from the teachers to explain any parts of the play. At the end of part one students whooped appreciatively but remained in their seats as the Assistant Head muted the interval chat on screen to provide his own comments about the production, and then to take a whole-year register. Students were told if they answered their name with a quote from *Macbeth* that they would receive three merits, an offer that many students took up, sometimes provoking laughter, especially when one student took the opportunity to answer with the 'unsex me' quote. Despite the instruction to stay in their seats, the students took advantage of the lull between the register and the start of the next section to move seats and talk to their friends. This caused a degree of chaos as students climbed over seats to move further to the back with their friends, started eating, and used their phones. Teachers attempted to get the students to sit back in their form groups after the break by emphasising that this was not a social occasion; as one teacher put it, the screening was 'not a chat' but 'watching *Macbeth*'. In such a large group, and with no way of pausing the stream to resolve the issues, it was not possible to return all students to their original seats and so many ended up sitting with friends for part two of the broadcast.

Having learned from the first break, at the beginning of the second break a member of senior management was present and announced that there was to be no

moving around during this break, and that students were to be accompanied to the bathroom if they needed to go. Teachers worked to move students forward so that no one was sat in the back rows of the auditorium, and students were silent for the beginning of the interval feature. Shots of other participating schools on screen rolled across the screen before the start of the interval features, prompting comments and laughter from the students. Obviously anxious to maintain the students' focus, I overheard one of the teachers asking another teacher if they could fast-forward to the production here, with the other replying that the RSC controlled the stream, and that it was not possible to fast-forward.

The end of the interval feature contained a warning from Akinwolere about sound issues at the beginning of the third part, somewhat confusingly putting the problems down to 'the beauty of live theatre'. These issues provoked laughter from the students at some quite serious moments of the third part, including Macduff receiving the news of his family's murder. There was also unintended or inappropriate laughter at a number of other moments, including Lady Macbeth's interaction with an audience member during the 'out damned spot' scene, and at an audience member in the theatre blowing their nose. Somewhat understandably, the students read the killing of Macbeth, and the end of a large countdown timer at the back of the stage that had started at King Duncan's murder, as the end of the play and began clapping, only to be shushed by teachers as the play continued. Once the play had actually finished the Q&A was muted and teachers organised a swift exit so that the students could get to the third lesson of the day, minimising time away from the rest of the school timetable. Rather than discussing the production after the broadcast the students were given a hand-out asking them to record their responses

to how Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and the witches were presented in the production to aid further discussions in their English lessons.

Figure 15: Michael Hodgson as the Porter, Christopher Eccleston as Macbeth and Niamh Cusack as Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* (RSC, 2018). dir. Polly Findlay. The countdown clock can be seen at the top right. Photo by Richard Davenport © RSC.

'This is not a chat, it is watching *Macbeth*': Watching Shakespeare as Work and Leisure

These observations demonstrate two very different ways of approaching Shakespeare in performance. When the teacher at KAA reprimanded a chatty student by reminding them that the broadcast was 'not a chat' but 'watching *Macbeth*', she encapsulated a particular view of Shakespearean spectatorship, one that is particularly heightened by the context of watching within a school. 'Watching *Macbeth*', it is implied, is an activity requiring a degree of gravitas and a seriousness

of purpose, diametrically opposed to the frivolity of having 'a chat' with friends; it is work not play, educational not social, pedagogy rather than just performance. For the students at KAA the RSC Schools' Broadcast of *Macbeth* was framed as an important educational experience, one that could help them better understand the play, and consequently, help them achieve higher grades on their GCSE English paper. These results have real-world consequences, both for the students' futures, and, as their first set of GCSE results, for the school, for whom they will function as a marker of the school's success over an incredibly challenging period.

The place of Shakespeare within examination structures means that, in order to appeal to the largest number of schools, the RSC Schools' Broadcasts must provide educationally valuable content, re-presenting their commercial productions as 'work' through the provision of suggested classroom exercises, and Q&As that focus on character and text, the aspects of the plays most commonly examined on. However, as the broadcast of *Twelfth Night* at SHS demonstrates, school broadcasts can also be put to use in ways that are less closely linked to the work of the curriculum. Indeed, at SHS the broadcast was framed as a break from the 'normal' work of the school, as a treat or reward in which usual school rules regarding food and mobile phone use were relaxed. The broadcast was still framed as 'educational' but in less tangible and immediate ways. The students participated in activities that familiarised them with Shakespeare's language – something that might be beneficial to them in their future studies of Shakespeare's play at GCSE – but the broadcast was not directly linked to an exam or test. The broadcast was presented as an enjoyable extra-curricular opportunity, in which the focus was on experiencing a 'live' performance rather than on accumulating a specific understanding of a specific play.

These two different experiences demonstrate how the educational and the theatrical converge within school broadcasts of Shakespeare and their reception. As Jan Wozniak has argued, a tension between performance and pedagogy is symptomatic of Shakespearean theatre designed and performed for young people, suggesting that such work is inherently implicated 'in competing purposes of education and entertainment' (Wozniak, 2016: 114). That producers of Shakespeare for young people feel the impetus to educate as well as entertain is unsurprising given the prevalence of Shakespeare within English literature education in the UK. Sarah Olive has charted how the study of Shakespeare was key to the development of English literature as an academic field in the early twentieth century, and the way in which Shakespeare has remained central (and compulsory) to curricula in England into the twenty-first despite regular changes in government (Olive, 2015). Olive argues that the lasting presence of Shakespeare on the curriculum despite political change 'demonstrates the way in which he now exists as part of a "dominant ideology" for education policy' (Olive, 2015: 48). Practically, this means that formal education is the 'most common way in which the population encounters [Shakespeare's] work' (Olive, 2015: 4). For the majority of people, in the UK at least, school is the first place that they will have encountered – or for future students, will encounter – Shakespeare, making it an important site in which ideas, feelings, and attitudes towards Shakespeare and his value are formed, ideas that may remain deeply ingrained and inform future interactions with the plays.

The place of Shakespeare within the education system, and in potentially future-defining exams, helps to explain why the broadcasts were framed as educational experiences by the RSC, as well as why 'watching *Macbeth'* was framed so insistently as 'work' at KAA. As well as providing an opportunity for students to

see a production of a play they are studying for GCSE, the *Macbeth* broadcast also offered additional Q&A sections, promising to enrich students' understanding of the play, and as a result, their exam results. The educational potential of the broadcasts acts as an incentive for teachers to participate, with the RSC benefitting from the amplification of 'brand recognition' that Bennett describes in return.

However, in order for students to recognise the RSC as a brand that they may one day want to engage with by attending a paid performance, the experience ideally has to be enjoyable as well as educational. The RSC are therefore engaged in a balancing act between providing an experience that is educationally robust but that is also potentially fun and engaging. The competing purposes of education and entertainment had an impact on reception, and were particularly clear at moments where students felt motivated to applaud, a theatrical convention that would usually be absent from an educationally motivated experience such as watching a Shakespeare film in class. The student audience at SHS, whose experience was framed more 'theatrically' throughout, with a focus on enjoyment rather than work, were especially motivated to clap, both at the ends of each section, and at the end of the play overall. However, the stream itself left no time for applause, transitioning directly into the Q&A sessions, which they were directed by the teacher to watch. The students' impulse to treat the experience as theatrical was at odds with the educational impetus of the stream, which they ultimately decided to override at the end of the play by clapping over the beginning of the final Q&A.

Even at KAA, where the broadcast was linked to curriculum work, the students whooped and applauded at the end of each section, and unlike at SHS, they were given time to do so as the interval features that followed each section were muted in order for the teachers to speak. Indeed, the broadcast at KAA

engaged far less with the 'educational' aspects of the stream than the broadcast at SHS, in that they did not make use of any of the preparation materials or activities provided by the RSC and in that they muted, or simply cut out, the 'extra' material provided around the production. Perhaps because they were studying the play in class and were therefore already fairly familiar with the plot and characters, and because they were pressed for time, the teachers made the decision that the students did not need to engage in this extra activity. This framed the broadcast as a (theatrical) component of their work on *Macbeth*, integrating it into a programme of work, rather than framing it as a standalone experience. The near removal of the 'educational' framing by the RSC stream, demonstrates that the degree to which the broadcasts are experienced as pedagogy or performance is, to a large extent, determined by the way the school positions (and manipulates) the broadcasts for students, rather than just by the content of the stream.

The way in which the broadcast is being used in relation to the curriculum shapes the way that schools frame spectatorship but, as the two observations demonstrate, use in the curriculum does not equate with greater engagement with the educational aspects of the stream. In fact, it was because the students at SHS were *not* studying *Twelfth Night*, that the teacher drew on the pre-broadcast activities, directed students to listen to the interval materials, and verbally intervened during the broadcast, in order to frame spectatorship in a way that would help students understand and appreciate the play. Even though the broadcast was positioned as a 'theatrical' experience, removed from curriculum work, the students were required to engage in classroom-like practices, and were subjected to the kind of interpretation and coaching that Wozniak identifies as endemic in experiences of Shakespeare for young people (2016: 61).

As the uncertainty over applause demonstrates, the merging of work and play can have an impact on spectatorship. Unsure about whether or not they were participating as students or audience members, engaged in an educational activity or a theatrical one, student applause clashed against the educational thrust of the stream, creating ambivalence in relation to the broadcast. As well as being a potential tactic to appeal to the widest range of schools and students possible, this merging of education and entertainment is informed by the more general approach that RSC Education take to teaching Shakespeare. Invested in challenging the idea that learning about Shakespeare must necessarily equate with 'work', the RSC have developed an educational strategy based on a 'Rehearsal Room' pedagogy, which derives its techniques from the practices of the theatre and has a particular focus on exploring the text as and through performance. As creative education researcher Jonothan Neelands and director of RSC Education Jacqui O'Hanlon explain, the RSC's approach to education,

> focuses on participation by young people as both actors and social commentators in the discovery of Shakespeare's scripts. The learning is based on critical enquiry, social interpretation and exploration of choices, carefully traced back to text and context. It is also based in the processes of acting to learn: using the intellectual and practical resources of classical theatre-making to construct practical and embodied knowledge of the plays rather than to receive and store stock responses; acting on the plays as well as acting within them.
>
> (Neelands and O'Hanlon, 2011: 243)

The RSC's approach is strongly influenced by Rex Gibson's active approach to teaching Shakespeare, which, Olive argues, is driven by 'an impetus to render Shakespeare approachable and accessible rather than a remote literary monument' and focuses on physical and social methods drawn from theatre and drama in order to explore the plays as scripts for performance (Olive, 2015: 65). Despite the focus

on performance, Neelands and O'Hanlon's summary reveals how performance is used to 'trace back to text and context', setting up an understanding of the text, rather than performance, as the ultimate goal. Their phrasing shows how whilst ostensibly favouring active methods, the RSC approach is also shaped by pedagogies that privilege text, including the literary critical and contextual approaches that Olive identifies as the two other main approaches to teaching Shakespeare (2015: 59).

The articulation of text-based learning as the end-goal of the RSC's performance-based approach is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the fact that most English examinations continue to be focused on text and context. Despite the RSC having been vocal advocates of active approaches to Shakespeare, lobbying schools and government through their 2008 'Stand up for Shakespeare' manifesto which encouraged teachers and students to 'Do it on your feet; See it Live; Start it Earlier' (See Winston, 2015: 13), and through their continued research into the impact of their approaches, English GCSE and A-Level exams remain largely focused on assessing students abilities to analyse character and text.[31] Literary critical approaches, which Olive describes as valuing Shakespeare 'primarily as literature [...] as a text to be read rather than as a script for performance' (2015: 59), are especially dominant, with GCSE English Literature papers from the three main awarding bodies in the UK (Edexcel, AQA and OCR) all asking students to write about how Shakespeare presents themes or characters, using close textual analysis of a given extract. Examination structures thus curb the relative freedom that the curriculum gives to teachers and schools around *how* Shakespeare should be

[31] The 'Stand up for Shakespeare' manifesto is reprinted in full in Issue 10 of *English, Drama, Media* (2008) pp.11-13.

taught, prioritising literary over contextual or performance methods, something which the RSC's approach is forced to recognise.

Although active methods such as the RSC's are popular with teachers, Olive notes that the space and time required for performance approaches mean that they can be difficult to fit into the existing school system and so remain underused. She also points out that active methods are often seen as entry-level approaches which are useful for getting students to engage with Shakespeare's plays and language but are to be supplanted by the more 'serious' business of textual analysis - an idea that is compounded by the examination structures at KS4 and KS5 (2015: 70-2). As an external institution marketing workshops and other resources to the education sector, the RSC must necessarily balance their own ethos with meeting the demands of the curriculum and examination bodies in order to ensure that what they offer remains relevant and useful for schools across all levels. The compromise, as articulated by Neelands and O'Hanlon in the quote above, is to position active and performance-based methods as a way of accessing and accumulating knowledge of the text. Although the RSC approach might fit more squarely into the teaching of Shakespeare in Drama, which does not have a national curriculum requirement, the English classroom is where Shakespeare is more commonly studied, and therefore where the greatest demand for external support lies. In order to accommodate a variety of Shakespeare pedagogies then, the 'play' of performance is positioned as a gateway to the 'work' of analysing and understanding text.

Initially the Schools' Broadcasts, in which students are required to sit and watch a play, seems slightly out of step with RSC Education's focus on the active participation of students in performance. However, Peter Kirwan has suggested that 'the focus on physical bodies, proximity and movement' in recent Shakespeare

pedagogy had tended to ignore new technologies except, he writes, ‘when that technology reinforces the live classroom’ (Kirwan, 2014b: 59). By reinforcing the ‘live classroom’, the Schools’ Broadcasts allow the RSC to utilise new technology, whilst also preserving the ‘liveness that has been central to recent movements in Shakespeare pedagogy’ (Kirwan, 2014b: 59).

The broadcasts therefore constitute a new, mediatised interpretation of the ‘See it Live’ motto, which was a key part of the RSC’s 2008 *Stand up for Shakespeare* manifesto. The importance of spectatorship to Shakespeare education was also emphasised in the contemporaneous *Shakespeare for All Ages and Stages* document which was sent from the Department of Children, Schools and Families to all state-funded schools in England. The document was designed to provide a ‘suggested framework of opportunities and experiences’ to help children and young people ‘make steady progress in their understanding and enjoyment of Shakespeare’ (DCSF, 2008: 1). It contained advice about spectatorship at each Key Stage, ranging from watching, reading or listening to ‘some of Shakespeare’s stories’ in KS1 to seeing ‘alternative productions of the same play, for example, on film or in the theatre’ in KS4 (8-9).

This advice was accompanied by tips, written by the RSC, on preparing students for a theatre visit (42). The idea that students must be coached or prepared for watching productions of Shakespeare is reflected in the advice sent to schools participating in the Schools’ Broadcasts. The broadcast guide for *Twelfth Night,* for example, states that in order for ‘students to enjoy the broadcast and have a positive experience watching the play, it is essential that they are prepared’, suggesting that teachers spend at least one lesson exploring the play with their students before the day of the broadcast. In recommending that students be prepared for watching the

broadcast, and in providing activities, the RSC seeks to integrate their rehearsal room pedagogies into the experience of watching the production. In the spaces around the production itself, students are prompted to participate in active methods approaches, as well as encouraged to actively participate in the live Q&A through social media.

The way that active approaches can sit alongside, and inform, the school broadcast experience is demonstrated by the *Twelfth Night* broadcast at SHS. Although having no time for preparation the day before the broadcast as recommended, the students' experience of the production was bookended by activities inspired by active methods. The first activity was taken directly from the broadcast guide (The Story in 20 Minutes) and sought to introduce them to the plot and characters by dividing them in small groups and getting them to narrate or perform small sections of the play, or to describe specific characters. The whole-group activity led by the teacher at the end of the broadcast also asked students to perform, as they worked with a speech from the play. Even as it was positioned as a leisure activity, separate from the work of school, spectatorship of the broadcast was also therefore framed within the context of the students' own learning and development both within, and beyond, their future curriculum work on Shakespeare.

By providing active-methods exercises in the broadcast guide the RSC can mobilise and promote their own active approach to Shakespeare, but whether schools actually undertake these activities is dependent on practicalities such as the availability of time and suitable space. At SHS, the flexibility and size of the Learning Resource Centre allowed students to easily move into groups and to perform for the pre-broadcast activity. As the students were designated 'off-timetable' for the morning, there was no great rush for them to get back to lessons, allowing the

teacher to finish off with the post-broadcast activity, during which the chairs were stacked to the sides, enabling all of the students to sit in a large circle on the floor. Additionally, the number and abilities of the students facilitated the use of active methods. As the teacher explained, the use of such methods to teach Shakespeare is relatively rare at the school, and she doubted that it would have been possible with students who were less engaged and interested in English and Shakespeare. At SHS the broadcast was therefore an opportunity for the teacher to try out teaching approaches not usually possible, as well as for (high-performing) students to experience and benefit from them. In contrast, the broadcast at KAA made no use of the materials provided by the RSC. Reflecting the extra pressures at KS4 compared to KS3, there was no time afforded for introductory or post-broadcast activities, and even if time had been given, the space of the auditorium and the large size of the group would have made undertaking such activities very challenging. Generally, there was a distinct lack of visibly active participation from students during the broadcast, and, along with the removal of much of the RSC's live content, this meant that the RSC's influence was greatly minimised, reduced mostly to the screening of the production itself.

The two very different ways in which the schools used the broadcast materials demonstrates how the RSC's Schools' Broadcasts function as versatile education products. An oscillation between education and entertainment, combined with digital distance, allows broadcasts to be framed differently at the point of reception depending on the needs and motivations of the schools. In relinquishing some control of reception, and in recognising the pressures of the curriculum, the RSC enable a much wider engagement across age group and school type. Student experiences of the broadcasts, and the degree to which they are experienced as

work or leisure, are therefore largely managed by the schools themselves in collaboration with the material provided by the RSC. However, there are a number of ways in which the RSC attempt to retain control of spectatorship in the Schools' Broadcasts. By only providing access 'live' on a single morning, and not enabling teachers to pause the stream the broadcasts bring together a large and temporally simultaneous audience across schools, creating the sense of a theatrical, as well as educational, event. In the following section I trace the different kinds of control and agency exerted in these experiences, arguing that both the RSC and teachers worked to control student attention, sometimes for competing reasons, and explore how these methods of control positioned students as audiences, shaping and determining their experiences.

'Can we fast-forward this?': Exerting Agency and Controlling Attention

The moment at which a teacher at KAA asked if it was possible to fast-forward to the interval features preceding the third section of *Macbeth* serves as a good example of the multiple levels of agency and control at work in the reception of the RSC Schools' Broadcasts. Most obviously, the school and its teachers played a key role in controlling the behaviour, and consequently, the attention, of this student audience. Having changed tactics after the first break, during which students had climbed over seats to sit with friends, the teachers at KAA kept students in their seats during the second break. Controlling movement had the intended effect of focusing student attention on the screen but had the unintended consequence of students laughing and making jokes about the pictures of other participating schools that were being

displayed on screen as a placeholder before the live interval feature. Sensing that the students' reaction had the potential to cause disruption, the teacher's impulse was to ask if they could skip over this section to the main content to keep students focused on the screen and the production. Of course, this was not possible because of the live distribution format; as another teacher informed the enquirer, the RSC controlled the timings of the stream, making it impossible to pause, fast-forward, or replay sections of the production. In controlling the temporality of the stream, the RSC exerted their own agency over reception, creating a 'liveness' that sought to replicate a more theatrical, rather than purely educational, mode of reception. In this moment at KAA, however, such efforts to maintain a sense of liveness worked against the teachers' desire to control student focus, resulting in a lull that allowed students to exert agency over their own reception.

This one moment demonstrates the interlocking relationships between RSC Education, teachers, and students in the school broadcast experience, and the way in which they seek to exert influence and control over reception. Much of this control relies on media form, distribution and use, with agency over reception depending on the ability to manipulate the temporal and spatial aspects of spectatorship. Whilst the RSC have the power to shape reception by streaming live, and teachers have ultimate power over defining reception by muting, or cutting short parts of the livestream, the Schools' Broadcast experience is defined by the fact that students have little to no choice over how they watch, and in most cases, over their participation in the first place. The potential ambivalence of the students to the production results in an anxiety over reception that centres around student attention. The fact that their participation is often compulsory makes it both easier, and more

difficult, to capture and hold their attention as an audience; they are a captive audience but they can be a reluctant one.

Unlike cinema broadcasts, where a clear commercial transaction takes place, these broadcasts are free for schools and students at the point of reception, meaning that they operate in a 'marketplace of attention' (See Webster, 2014). Susan Bennett suggests that student attention functions as a central commodity within this marketplace, arguing that the broadcasts represent an attempt by the RSC (and their corporate sponsors) to capture the attention of school pupils on a large scale, in a bid to build brand recognition and future audiences (Bennett, 2018). However, understanding the Schools' Broadcasts as primarily an exercise in which the attention of young people is controlled by the RSC in order to be converted into delayed economic capital overlooks the ways in which the broadcasts operate in a specific marketplace of attention – the school – in which student attention is already regulated by teachers and other mediators. It does not account for the possibility that students might attend in divergent ways, paying attention to the 'wrong' things, and does not consider how watching in a school might influence the associations students build with the RSC and Shakespeare, both positively and negatively. It also risks minimising the important roles that teachers play in framing and presenting the broadcasts to students. In both of the broadcasts, teachers worked to control the attention of students, often refocusing it back onto the production when it drifted from the screen. They did so not in the service of the RSC's bottom line but because they felt that in exchange for 'paying' attention to Shakespeare in performance the students would accumulate both educational and cultural capital. As well as the potential economic value of student attention then, the value of Shakespeare,

performance, and education, also influences the ways that reception and attention are controlled in these Schools' Broadcasts.

Locating the value of students' participation in the Schools' Broadcasts for the RSC in their potential future interactions with the theatre also overlooks the ways in which the broadcasts promote not only the company's work as a theatre but as an education provider. Whilst RSC Education is closely aligned with the RSC, drawing its 'rehearsal room' pedagogy from the practices of the theatre, it functions apart from the theatrical business of the company, undertaking its activities autonomously. Although the Schools' Broadcasts are based around the screening of an RSC production, the way in which the broadcasts are formatted, framed and presented can be seen as marketing the pedagogical approach and commercial activities of RSC Education, as well as the company's theatrical activity. This is evident in the way that the teacher packs contain preparation activities that draw on active methods approaches, giving a taster of RSC Education's approach, and in the inclusion of an RSC Education representative in the live sections to interpret and guide student reception. Such features seek to ensure that the broadcast is experienced not just as an RSC production but as an RSC Education experience.

Understanding the Schools' Broadcasts specifically as an RSC Education initiative is useful in that it illuminates how attracting the attention of teachers, as well as that of students, is a key aim of the school broadcasts. Not only do teachers make purchasing decisions about workshops but they are also gatekeepers of student attention, with control over if students participate and how they do so. Working with teachers is one of RSC Education's most important educational strategies (Winston, 2015: 6), providing a range of continued professional development programmes for teachers focused on teaching Shakespeare, along with their workshops and

schemes designed for students. Maintaining relationships with teachers, and training them in RSC-based educational methods, is important not only because they represent RSC Education's primary customer base but because teachers play an important role in the kind of 'brand recognition' that Bennett identifies as the primary motivation for the broadcasts.

Matthew Reason argues that school theatre trips are motivated by 'institutional investment from both the education and cultural industries, along with significant personal and emotional investment from the teachers and other individuals concerned' (Reason, 2010a: 20, 23). This 'personal and emotional investment from teachers' was similarly evident in the broadcasts that I observed. Participation in the broadcasts was driven by individual teachers who made the case for participation to the school and senior management, liaised with RSC Education, and were ultimately responsible for organising the logistical and administrative aspects of the screenings. The success of the broadcasts therefore relies on a network of motivated individuals who see participation as valuable, perhaps based on their own memorable experiences of performance, Shakespeare and/or the RSC, and so work to facilitate the screenings, mediating between the RSC, schools, and students.

In relation to the marketing, or 'brand recognition', function of the broadcasts, teachers could be said to function as 'brand ambassadors', individuals who effectively endorse, promote, and disseminate the RSC and their approach to Shakespeare. This works best for the RSC when the teachers themselves are enthusiastic about Shakespeare, the RSC, and their pedagogy, a mechanism that was most clearly demonstrated during the *Twelfth Night* screening at SHS. Clearly committed to, and enthusiastic about, providing opportunities for her students to see

Shakespeare performed live, as well as the RSC itself, the organising teacher included some of the RSC's suggested activities before the screening, encouraged students to join in with the wider conversation, and undertook her own active methods activity after the broadcast. Her investment in the RSC and Shakespearean performance as part of her teaching was also clear from her classroom, the walls of which were dominated by official posters from recent RSC and Shakespeare's Globe productions. The posters position Shakespeare as central to English Literature education, position performance as central to Shakespeare education, and position Shakespearean theatre brands – especially the RSC and the Globe – as the locus of authoritative Shakespearean performance. In the display of performance posters, this classroom functioned as an alternative site of encountering Shakespeare in performance, influencing students' formative ideas about its value and its associated 'brands'. The posters were also evidence of the teacher's personal (and positive) engagements and experiences with Shakespeare in performance. The clear motivation to pass on a passion for Shakespeare and theatre to her students, and her own engagement with the RSC, makes her more likely to participate in the Schools' Broadcasts, even when – as was the case with *Twelfth Night* – the production is not linked to curriculum work.

As well as facilitating access to the broadcasts, teachers also had an active role in shaping their reception, exerting their own agency and control over student attention. During both observations teachers worked to control student focus and attention. With the smaller, and more select, group at SHS, the teacher's interventions during the broadcast were mostly verbal, offering explanations of the plot and characters at particularly confusing points, reflecting the students' lack of experience with *Twelfth Night.* Rather than providing interpretations of the play or

production, these interventions sought to maintain student attention and focus, ensuring that they followed the plot. Generally the teacher maintained quite a relaxed approach to controlling attention and behaviour and students were able to react and respond to the production verbally and with laughter, and often chatted to each other. However, the teacher was a constant presence in the room, intervening when the noise level became too loud or attention seemed to be veering away from the production. The way that the proximity of a teacher can affect and control reception was also evident during the screening at KAA where the dispersion of teachers around the room worked to prevent students from engaging in 'disruptive' behaviour. Indeed at KAA control over student reception was more often exerted via spatial arrangements orchestrated by teachers and senior management than by verbal interventions during the production, as they were instructed where to sit and were asked to move if perceived to be sitting in groups that might cause disruption or distraction.

For the most part, these verbal and spatial ways of controlling attention meant that the teachers reinforced RSC Education's attempts to focus student attention onto the screen. However, sometimes the teachers' actions worked against the RSC's intentions. Although the RSC had control over the timings of the stream, the teachers had ultimate control over what to show the students, and could ignore, talk over, cut short, or mute whatever they wanted. At KAA the teachers did not engage at all with the preparation materials provided by the RSC, and most of the para-production materials, including the majority of the introduction and the entirety of the final 20-minute Q&A, were either muted or cut. The Assistant Head's own introduction to the production framed the experience as a privilege that would help with GCSE preparation, focusing on the needs of this particular group of students.

Even at SHS, where the RSC preparation activities were embraced and the students watched most of the extra materials, the teacher prioritised the preparation activities over watching the beginning of the introduction, and the decision to provide snacks created a commotion that won out over watching the Q&A in the first break. Whilst RSC Education wield control over the temporality of the stream as a way of generating mass attention, it is ultimately the teacher, or relevant adult, who determines exactly how students watch and engage with these school broadcasts.

Like the venues in Chapter 1, teachers acted as cultural intermediaries, determining and positioning the cultural value of the broadcasts and Shakespeare for students. In the broadcasts, the attitude of the teacher towards Shakespeare, the RSC, and theatre shapes not only if students participate but how they do so, playing a significant role in how students recognise the RSC brand. Whilst the 'brand ambassador' comparison is a useful one in describing how the RSC might perceive teachers in this regard, and may accurately describe how some teachers function in relation to the broadcasts, teachers also have their own agency and agendas for participation that go beyond, and sometimes contradict, those of the RSC. As the near elision of RSC influence and extra materials in the *Macbeth* screening at KAA demonstrates, operating away from the surveillance of RSC Education and their representatives means that teachers can decide how to present the production and put it to use. At KAA the broadcast was a convenient way to show students a live performance of a play that they were studying for GCSE; any 'brand recognition' resulting from the experience was incidental rather than intended. Even those teachers who are Shakespeare or RSC 'fans' are unlikely to participate with the explicit purpose of promoting the RSC but rather because they see value, whether educational, cultural or personal, in the experience for their students.

With both the RSC and teachers working to control the attention and experience of students, students themselves appear to have little control or agency over how they participate. The broadcasts occur during compulsory school hours, meaning that they have little to no choice over whether or not they take part. On screen, the RSC seek to control their attention and guide spectatorship through live segments and Q&A sessions. At the point of reception, teachers further mediate their spectatorship by positioning them physically, restricting movement and social interactions, as well as deciding which parts of the broadcast to watch, and providing their own context for the screenings which might seek to pre-determine how students *should* value the experience. The desire to control student attention partly derives from the fact that it is the key commodity in the broadcasts but also from an anxiety over the reception of Shakespeare by young people, manifesting in a belief that students must be tutored in Shakespearean spectatorship. Such an attitude is evident in the *Shakespeare for All Ages* document which includes advice from the RSC about preparing students for a theatre visits. Guides for teachers such as Fiona Banks' also suggest that 'becoming an engaged, critical audience member for most young people is a journey' and that preparation for watching a Shakespeare play should include not only work on the play and production but an introduction to what it means to be an audience for live theatre (Banks, 2014: 9; 198-9). In both cases the preparation advice given is framed specifically as empowering students by providing them with the tools to interpret what they see on stage for themselves.

The idea that young people can only acquire agency as audiences through being taught how to spectate is one reiterated by theatre audience researcher Matthew Reason. Theatre-going, Reason argues, 'is a learned activity, governed by a complex set of cultural values and implied social codes, which individuals need to

adopt for themselves if they are to internalize a sense of entitlement, ownership and legitimacy as members of the audience' (Reason, 2010a: 29). Providing young people with spectatorship skills, he proposes, would give them the confidence to 'take possession of the cultural forms on offer on their own terms and in their own right' (30). In all of these formulations, young people are assumed to be ill-equipped for theatre, and particularly Shakespearean, spectatorship, with teaching positioned as the gateway to gaining agency as a 'legitimate' audience member. Implicit in this is the suggestion that in order for a theatrical encounter to be valuable to a young person, it must be experienced in a certain way; in order to acquire cultural capital from their experiences they must learn the rules of theatrical spectatorship and in order to be 'legitimate' they must learn to watch like everyone else. In including preparation materials, Q&As and live features that guide students in what to look out for, the Schools' Broadcasts display this anxiety around student spectatorship. In the way that they encourage a theatrical mode of shared, 'live' spectatorship, the project in itself can also been seen as an attempt to introduce a large number of school children to watching theatre (and, no less significantly, to watching theatre broadcasts), providing them with the skills needed to watch and engage with live theatre in future.

However, the degree to which the broadcasts actually empower students, providing them with 'entitlement, ownership and legitimacy' over their spectatorship is questionable. Jan Wozniak is critical of positioning young people as 'apprentice professional spectators', particularly criticising Reason's focus on widening participation in existing forms of theatre, rather than giving 'young audiences agency in shaping the type of theatre they want now, or indeed what sort of theatre they might make and enjoy once they become adults' (2016: 157). Wozniak argues that

Shakespeare performance is capable of 'rehearsing, exploring and demonstrating the existence of a democratic republic' but suggests that the emancipatory potential of Shakespeare performance is curbed for young people by the impulse to subject them to interpreters rather than allowing them to find their own meanings in performance (4). 'Teaching' spectatorship, Wozniak argues, positions young audiences as 'participating in an elite activity, rather than an activity which is accessible to all', mitigating the potential for performances to construct young people as political beings (132). Wozniak's argument that interpretation and guidance does not, as Banks and Reason suggest above, lead to increased agency and empowerment for young audiences, but rather limits their agency and ability to engage with performance politically, is evident in the way that students were able, and unable, to respond and engage during the Schools' Broadcasts. During the stream at least, student agency to determine the shape of their own experiences was minimal. There were a number of moments where students took control of their spectatorship, such as moving to sit with friends, taking full advantage of the permission to bring snacks, laughing at their own jokes, chatting, and clapping despite not being given time to do so, but mostly student agency was carefully controlled, or at SHS, framed as a privilege.

Wozniak's proposed solution to reduced political agency for young people in performances of Shakespeare is to stop treating such performance as another form of literary analysis and to promote a theatrical approach to Shakespeare that privileges the 'temporally and geographically specific collaborative process' of theatre (164). Such a solution based on temporal and geographic co-presence and collaboration would necessarily preclude pre-recorded Schools' Broadcasts from ever enabling agency and political engagement in its student audiences. In the

broadcasts, student agency is in competition with the RSC's desire to control student attention, as well as under the control of teachers who direct attention for behavioural and educational purposes. Market and educational demands mean that in these experiences, encouraging student agency is not a priority. However, in their encouragement of students to tweet using the official hashtag in order to ask questions for the Q&A, the RSC appear to court the active participation of students. In the next section, I focus on how Twitter was used in the broadcasts by the RSC, teachers, and students, and at how digital and physical communities of reception functioned in these experiences. Some of the comments on Twitter, and some of the short discussions and reactions at the point of reception, provide a glimpse of where student agency could lie in these experiences, and how such broadcasts might yet position its audiences as already able to speak about Shakespeare.

'Do you know how twitter works?': Digital and Physical Communities of Reception

Discussing the experience of university students watching NT Live's *Hamlet* (2015) in North American cinemas, Ann M. Martinez argues that her students' attendance as part of an educational course is likely to have framed their reception suggesting that 'pre-broadcast class discussions, [...] group attendance, and [...] post-broadcast discussions helped foster a sense of community, a community of reception, with their classmates' (2018: 204). Martinez's observations highlight the importance of physical communities to broadcast experiences and the way in which educational endeavour can create its own sense of community. Similar forms of community are at play in the RSC Schools' Broadcasts. Like a cinema broadcast, students and teachers come

together at the point of reception, forming a physical community of reception. The sense of community is strengthened by the fact that the audience is comprised of pre-existing communities of learners, with the organisation of schools into year groups, form groups, and classes creating specific community dynamics. As well as forms of community based on physical presence, the RSC Schools' Broadcasts also seek to foster a sense of a wider, virtual, community of reception that extends beyond the walls of the school. By restricting when schools are able to access the stream to a given morning, and by only letting them watch 'live', the broadcasts bring together a large, temporally simultaneous, audience across schools.

The knowledge that others are watching at the same time influences how audiences conceptualise themselves as part of a wider community of reception but this remote audience are also made manifest in the introductory and interval materials. Maps showing the location of participating schools, the display of photos of participating schools, and the reading of questions sent in by students makes the audience particularly visible, emphasising the idea of a shared experience across schools. Students are also encouraged to tweet using an official hashtag in order to create an online community where spatially disconnected audience members can communicate directly. These digital forms of community interact with the physical communities in schools to create complex communities of reception. As Erin Sullivan writes of the use of Twitter alongside the cinema broadcast of KBTC Live's *Romeo and Juliet* (2016), engagement with social media results in 'two kinds of presence materializing simultaneously', one based on 'embodied proximity', and the other on 'digital connectedness' (Sullivan, 2018: 65).

Sullivan points out that the way in which these forms of presence are experienced in cinemas is likely to be different for each audience member, and

similarly, the way that virtual and physical communities of reception interact during the Schools' Broadcasts varies from school to school. Whilst students at SHS were encouraged to tweet by their teacher during the intervals, and were even given permission to use their phones during the broadcast under the proviso that they were only using them to tweet about the production, the students at KAA were forbidden from using mobile phones at any point during the broadcast, meaning that they were unable to participate in the digital conversation forming around the production on Twitter. The way in which they experienced 'embodied proximity' was also carefully managed by teachers. They were seated in form (rather than friendship) groups as they arrived, with potentially disruptive groups identified and separated before the beginning of the broadcast. The fact that students were not sat in their chosen social groups worked to minimise discussion and disruption, with the dispersion of teachers throughout the auditorium acting to further limit social interactions.

Although not able to participate actively in the online conversation, and with existing micro-communities physically separated, students at KAA were prompted by teachers to consider their participation in the screening in relation to both the school community and the wider community of reception beyond the school. Warnings about behaviour were emphasised by the fact that they were on the premises of another school, casting the students as representatives for KAA, while the fact they were participating as a year group, meant that they constituted an existing community of learners with a shared knowledge of the play from their GCSE classes. The introduction from the Assistant Head emphasised both the importance of the broadcast to this group's continued study of the play, as well as the privilege of participating in the broadcast alongside so many other schools, thus moving

between framing the broadcast as a local, school activity, and one that is nationwide and remote.

When the broadcast introduction was unmuted, comments from the presenters that the *Macbeth* broadcast was the biggest one yet, with 35,000 students across the country participating, worked to further create the sense of a wider community of reception. However, much of the interval material in the first break, which would have contained questions and comments from other schools watching, was muted in order for the Assistant Head to provide his own comments and take a register, prioritising the proximate community over the virtual one. The activity of responding to the register with a quote from the play solidified both the sense of the group as a familiar community of learners as they laughed at and appreciated each other's replies. The students' movement at the end of the first break to sit with friends, and the teachers' inability to re-seat them in form groups, created new social configurations of students, shifting how they could communicate with each other both during the production and in the breaks.

Although participation in a wider event was framed as an important aspect of the broadcast at KAA, the practicalities of the screening tended to minimise the significance of the wider audience, meaning that it remained an abstraction rather than a defining aspect of the experience. Indeed, as discussed above, when photographs of other schools were displayed on screen before the second interval feature, making this abstracted community of reception manifest, they provoked laughter and some derisive comments from the students, hinting at an ambivalent relationship between the physically present audience, and those participating elsewhere. Comments such as 'I thought our uniform was bad but look at theirs' suggest that rather than encouraging the students to envisage themselves as

participating as part of a large, cohesive group of spectators, the images of other schools actually prompted an 'othering' of remote schools in which existing physical communities and bonds were reinforced through laughter.

The challenges of encouraging students to simultaneously participate in embodied and remote communities of reception were also evident from the way in which students and teachers outside of KAA utilised Twitter during the broadcast of *Macbeth*. Participants were encouraged by the presenters to use the hashtag #RSCMacbeth during the course of the morning to send in questions and comments. Between the 26th April and the 27th April 2018 there were just over 1400 tweets containing the hashtag. Around 980 of these were from accounts that could reasonably be assumed to belong to students, meaning that, not accounting for students who tweeted more than once, a maximum of 2.8% of the total 35,000 students watching participated in 'official' tweeting. The small percentage indicates that experiences like that of the students at KAA, where students did not directly engage online with other audience members, were common. Despite this, looking at how audiences did engage with Twitter during the broadcast demonstrates the possibilities and pitfalls of using social media as a way to increase audience interaction and create an online community during schools broadcasts.

Although representing a proportionally small number of the total student audience, students were the most prolific tweeters, sending 980 tweets compared to 390 from accounts run by individual teachers or official departmental or school accounts. RSC Education tweeted just four times from their account, and although they liked a number of tweets, they did not engage directly by replying to tweets or answering questions. Three tweets were from home educators and there were 24 tweets from other accounts, which included Virgin Media – the corporate sponsor of

the broadcast – as well as a parent, an actor, and a number of accounts that had automatically picked up on the trending hashtag in order to promote irrelevant products or links. Reflecting Sullivan's findings about the use of Twitter alongside cinema broadcasts, the tweets about the broadcast, and especially those from teachers, school, or departmental accounts, were generally positive. 35 tweets mentioned feeling excited in relation to the upcoming stream, and 127 registered that they were enjoying the experience. Tweets from teachers or schools tended to speak on behalf of the student experience: a particularly common form of tweet was a photograph of students at the screening accompanied by a tweet that was a variation on the formula 'Year/Class X students enjoying/excited about the screening of #RSCMacbeth this morning at Y school'. The inclusion of photos in tweets was particularly prominent, with 304 tweets including some form of media taken by the tweeter, many of which included students watching the screenings or selfies that students had taken and posted themselves.

These posts functioned in a similar way to the tweeting before cinema broadcasts described by Sullivan, with references to specific schools, classes, and year groups, working as an 'announcement of presence' that 'helped physically situate spectators' experiences and give them a material reality' (Sullivan, 2018: 65). Including locations and photos seems to have offered those tweeting 'a way of celebrating co-present togetherness while also participating in the wider production of aliveness online', fusing the national and the local in a way that was very different to KAA's reaction to seeing photos of other schools on the big screen (Sullivan, 2018: 65). Indeed, the fact that the RSC were choosing tweets to display on the screen and to use during the Q&A added another dimension to the act of tweeting that went beyond the creation of online co-presence and aliveness. As well as

announcing their presence as spectators, many of the tweets also functioned as requests for recognition in a way that was similar to tweeting a live radio or television broadcast. 38 tweets included ‘shout-outs’, or requests to the RSC to ‘shout out’ their school but many of the tweets – such as those in the formula above – sought this recognition indirectly. Moreover, such tweets from school or departmental accounts also performed a double function in relation to recognition, working not only to announce their presence to the RSC and the online community, but to advertise the fact – to parents and the wider community – that the school was providing students with a ‘high’ cultural extra-curricular experience.

Whilst the reaction to the broadcast on Twitter from teachers and school accounts was largely positive, the students’ use of the platform was far more complex, resisting easy categorisation. Bolstered by the relative anonymity of Twitter, and the fact that it was not possible for either the RSC, schools, or individual teachers to regulate or delete tweets, a number of students used the platform to complain about the broadcast or to disrupt the feed with irrelevant comments. Of the 980 tweets from students, over a quarter contained material that was either irrelevant or offensive, with some students even going so far as to set up fake or ‘troll’ accounts to tweet about the broadcast. These tweets were some of the most popular, with the ‘top’ tweet, or the tweet with the most interactions – which is too distasteful to repeat here – receiving 115 likes, 33 retweets and 6 replies. Whilst genuine questions about the production rarely received any interactions from other spectators, even the rather mundane tweet below from the anonymous account ‘@MacbethHate’ received 25 likes, seven retweets and four comments.

Figure 16: An example of a tweet from a 'troll' or fake account set up for the broadcast.

Whilst it would be easy to dismiss this type of tweet as little more than disruption born from boredom, or an attempt to shock for attention, many of these tweets did engage in more nuanced ways with the production, making attempts at humour in order to gain recognition, not from the RSC (who, as I am sure students were aware, were unlikely to include their contributions in the Q&As) but from their fellow students. Students were more likely than teachers or school accounts to 'livetweet' throughout the production, meaning that they tended to comment on the production as it occurred rather than crafting structured responses and questions. These comments often combined the play with a popular culture reference, deriving humour from anachronistic comparisons. Of particular interest was Michael Hodgson's Porter, who was dressed as a janitor and remained on stage throughout the entire production. There were a number of genuine questions about the Porter's constant presence in the production but students were particularly drawn to comment on his costume, and especially his shoes. Using a slang term for 'trainers', comments included 'My only question is why the porter has such fresh creps on' and 'Lowkey how do I get those fire creps that the porter is wearing'. Although the trainers were probably unremarkable to most audience members at the theatre and in cinemas, for this audience group the shoes unwittingly resonated with a trend in current youth culture for wearing 1990s-style sports footwear, enabling the students to co-opt the Porter into their own discourse and to create tweets that both comment

on the production and strive to make their remote peers laugh. Much of the community building through Twitter during the *Macbeth* broadcast – for students, at least – was adjacent to, rather than directly through, the production itself. Students used the platform as a space for public performance, often making jokes about the production in order to gain recognition from others. Some tweeters employed memes, using recognisable photos and GIFs to express their reactions, or took pictures of the production to turn into memes of their own. These uses of Twitter by students, although perhaps not envisaged by the RSC when they encouraged tweeting, often demonstrate genuine engagement with the play designed to communicate with – and perform to – the wider community of reception.

Alongside these 'unintended' uses of Twitter there were 330 tweets, from a mixture of student and other accounts, that used the platform in the 'prescribed' way, asking questions for the live Q&A. The questions asked tended to focus around production decisions, such as the significance of the large countdown clock at the back of the stage and the aforementioned role of the Porter, rather than the matter of

Figure 17: Niamh Cusack as Lady Macbeth and Michael Hodgson as the Porter, wearing his 'fresh creps', in *Macbeth* (RSC, 2018).

the play itself, perhaps reflecting the older age of the audience and their familiarity with the play given its status as a GCSE set-text. Casting was given particular attention, with both students and teachers asking about the casting of the witches as young children, as well as the choice to cast a woman (Donna Banya) as Donalbain. Although some of the anonymous and troll tweeting demonstrated a (deliberate) lack of sensitivity around issues of race, gender, and sexuality, two students took to Twitter to voice their concerns that casting two black actors (Afolabi Alli and Steve Basaula) as the murderers perpetuated negative racial stereotypes. Since parts of the live Q&A sections were muted during the KAA screening I am unable to say whether or not these questions were addressed by the Assistant Director, but the questions certainly went unanswered online. Whilst the use of Twitter opened up the potential for a productive two-way dialogue between student audiences and creatives, the live Q&A format, in which questions were pre-selected and put to interviewees 'on-air' actually inhibited any potential for direct contact and conversation. The Q&A format allowed those without Twitter to participate by emailing in and underscored the 'liveness' of the broadcast but, in choosing not to engage with questions directly online, the RSC Schools' Broadcasts miss out on the direct engagement with the audience that a platform such as Twitter offers.

In mediating between the audience and the creatives by selecting questions and turning student queries into content, RSC Education altered the dynamics between the student audience and how they communicated and functioned as a wider community of reception. A number of tweeters during both broadcasts expressed excitement at having a question from their school read out. One teacher at the *Twelfth Night* broadcast wrote 'you answered our question! Bit too excited to listen to the answer but we did get there!', underscoring how the experience of

having a question read out was valued above actually finding out the answer to it. Whilst exciting for those students who have questions read out, for those who missed out the format was particularly frustrating. Unlike at KAA where phone use was banned, at the *Twelfth Night* screening at SHS, students were allowed, and even encouraged by the teacher, to tweet, providing an insight into how Twitter use affected reception within schools. It was obvious that Twitter was not a familiar platform for the students, or indeed for the teacher, who replied that she did not know how Twitter worked when asked, and only a small number of students ultimately participated in tweeting. For one student, having his tweet read out became a bit of a mission, and when a similar question to one of his own was read out he complained noisily. It is perhaps understandable why his tweet – 'if you could sum up the play in 20 words, how?' – was overlooked in favour of 'if you could sum up the play in three words what would they be', although this was not obvious to the student. The two questions demonstrate how the Q&A format privileges those well-

Figure 18: A tweet from a student commenting on the use of music in *Twelfth Night* (RSC, 2017) using a popular meme of Moe Szyslak from The Simpsons.

versed in how to use Twitter, as well as those able to second guess the types of question that will appeal to the RSC.

The role that RSC Education have in filtering and selecting questions for the live sections of the school broadcasts, and therefore the role they play in the way that the productions are framed for students, was clear in the differences between the tweets surrounding the *Twelfth Night* broadcast and the types of question that were selected for the Q&As. Perhaps due to a smaller overall audience size, there were far fewer tweets than the *Macbeth* broadcast, with just 200 tweets quoting #RSCTwelfth or #RSCTwelfthNight between 7th March 2018 and 9th March 2018. Irrelevant or inappropriate content was far less common (6% of total tweets compared to 18% of total *Macbeth* tweets), and this time there were roughly the same number of tweets from students as from school or teacher accounts. Beyond expressions of positivity, student tweets focused largely around two main topics. The first of these was Rupert Cross's music, and especially the repeated use of the song 'Jolly Robin'. Although generally much more positive in tone than the *Macbeth* tweets, many of the students also used Twitter primarily as a way to amuse their peers, drawing on the shared experience of the song as a source of humour. Often combining their tweets with memes or GIFs, a number of students used Twitter to either complain about, or celebrate, the music (see Fig. 18).

The second topic of interest was the portrayal of gender and sexuality throughout the production. Some students tweeted direct questions about the sexuality of the characters, asking 'Is Orsino Bi?', and 'Is Antonio Sebastian's sugar daddy?'. Other students obviously had no doubt in their minds about how Orsino's sexuality was being portrayed writing 'I appreciate the amount of homosexuality in this' and, relating to their own experiences, commenting that 'Orsino thinking he's in

love with Olivia is like me in Y7 insisting I'm straight'. The interest students showed in exploring these elements of the production was mirrored in the screening at SHS, where students sought clarification from their teacher when Orsino and Viola, disguised as Cesario, shared a kiss on stage. Seeking further information, one of the students tweeted to find out more, asking 'Why did you choose to do the kiss when so many other productions don't'.

His question remained unanswered, as the live Q&As avoided discussing the production's exploration of gender, and in particular, sexuality. Instead, the questions selected tended to be focused on quite basic issues of plot and character motivation, which, although perhaps appealing to younger audience members, largely bored the group of 11-15 year olds with whom I was watching. In comparing the tweets with the questions read out on screen it is clear that a decision was made to mediate and filter the questions posed in order to steer the conversation from themes which may have been regarded by some as unsuitable for younger audience members. This came at the cost of a missed opportunity to engage older students with some of the elements of the production that they found most interesting. Questions such as 'why is Malvolio so grumpy?' meant that students missed out on what could have been a productive and insightful discussion about gender roles and sexuality sparked by questions like 'Do you think the play would have been different if Sebastian had been the one to switch genders?'.

Although RSC Education felt it necessary to avoid discussion of the way same-sex relationships and desire were portrayed in the production, they were happy to include discussions of heterosexual relationships by including questions such as 'Why doesn't Olivia love Orsino?', bearing echoes of a 'Section 28' mentality, in which discussions of homosexual relationships are seen as

inappropriate for children, whilst the discussion of heterosexual ones are perceived as benign. Although Section 28 of the Local Government Act, which stated that local authorities should not promote homosexuality or portray homosexuality positively in schools, was repealed across the UK in 2003, the RSC's reluctance to engage with the topic (which is explored interestingly in the production) as part of a schools project suggests that they may have been wary of prevailing and continuing prejudice against teaching about same-sex relationships, which may have caused some schools and parents to react negatively to the broadcast and put them off participating in future.[32]

As well as being problematic on a wider political level, this reluctance to engage also meant that the online conversation and audience community bore very little connection to the live Q&A sections of the broadcast. Rather than speaking back to the Twitter conversation, the Q&A tended to speak across it, leaving the desire for recognition motivating a number of the tweets largely unrealised. Unlike an in-person Q&A or a radio phone-in, in which the speakers must deal with the questions asked, the broadcast performed the concept of audience interactivity and participation by encouraging audiences to use Twitter but largely ignored them once they were there, carefully selecting and filtering questions in a way that minimised the audience's agency for shaping how the broadcast was framed and received through time.

Although not recognised 'officially' by the RSC, those participating in tweeting also sought recognition from other audience members, forming an online audience community that was tangential to the broadcast itself. In both the *Macbeth* and

[32] Recent protests outside of a number of schools over inclusive relationship education suggests that such prejudice still exists. See TES (2019).

Twelfth Night broadcasts, students made use of the shared experience of the production as the basis of jokes and comments posted on Twitter, with this remote 'laughter' forming, and performing, a community of reception. This community was strengthened through use of internet idioms, language such as 'creps', and references to popular youth culture such as the online game Fortnite, which identify the students as a pre-existing, but geographically separate, community based on shared experiences and their participation in internet and media culture. Laughter, or attempting to provoke laughter, had a key part to play in the formation of this online community, especially between students, but it was also a factor in forms of co-present community at the point of reception. In the more relaxed atmosphere of the screening at SHS, students were able to sit in friendship groups and often talked quietly among themselves whilst also remaining focused on the broadcast. The students' laughter was sometimes delayed in relation to the laughter on screen, suggesting that they were making comments or jokes to each other about the production, in a way that reflects what many of the students using Twitter were attempting to achieve. Whilst the absence of the students' laughter at Toby Belch's flatulence distinguished them as a community separate from the theatre audience, the students' inside jokes about the production reinforced the bonds of their own micro-communities.

In their gathering together of co-temporal audiences, who are at once co-present with members of their own school and connected remotely (if only imaginatively) to others, the RSC Schools' Broadcasts create inherently social experiences. The distance from the originating performance as well as the use of Twitter, create spaces in which audiences members – especially students – can insert themselves and perform alongside, and in reaction to, the play itself. The

audience constituted a ‘community of reception’ on a number of different levels but this community was neither fully coherent nor consistent across schools. Even from observations at just two schools it is clear that the way in which community is experienced during school broadcasts is dependent on variable factors at the point of reception, from the size and group watching, how they are organised in relation to one another, and whether or not students are permitted to chat, eat, or use mobile phones. The way in which students experienced what Sullivan describes as ‘embodied proximity’ differed in relation to these factors, which in turn had an impact on their relationship with the wider audience, or their experience of ‘digital connectedness’. For those students at KAA who were unable to participate in reading or sending tweets, this wider community was largely imaginary, produced and mediated by what the RSC chose to show on screen, resulting in an ‘othering’ of the digital audience and a reinforcement of the community bond between those physically co-present. Forms of ‘digital connectedness’ manifested online through Twitter were also fractured, with minimal interactions between teacher, school and student accounts. The lack of two-way exchange between students and the RSC, and the RSC’s move to neatly package a messy online conversation into a staged Q&A felt like a missed opportunity to harness the potential of Twitter to foster conversation about the productions.

Indeed, the strongest signs of ‘digital connectedness’ were not necessarily in the form that the RSC may have imagined, as students utilised the cultural capital of the play to make jokes and comments for an audience of peers, binding the audience together through common, if not necessarily positive, experience. Understanding that this kind of interaction was obviously not the kind that the RSC were hoping to encourage, one student watching the *Macbeth* broadcast tweeted

‘When you gonna realise school kids will just meme the shit out of this play...why give access to live performances and twitter?’. The tweet nods to the enjoyment students had in using the platform, perhaps in a deliberately disruptive way, as part of their experience, and reveals the rift between the RSC’s imagined vision of a productive, engaged, community of reception across schools, and the reality, which also includes reluctant spectators and dissident voices.

Whilst Twitter may represent a space for this dissent, the degree of agency students have to communicate, both in person and online, was highly dependent on how their experiences are externally controlled by teachers and other adults, something that is itself influenced by the school environment, its delineations of work and leisure, and the role of digital technology within those delineations. The social potential of the broadcasts is curbed by a perceived need to control behaviour to maintain focus, as well as the idea that ‘watching Shakespeare’ is a serious activity and ‘not a chat’. On Twitter, students demonstrated quite complex spectatorship skills, remixing, in real time, what they were watching with GIFs and photos to create memes, often commenting on and interpreting the production in ways that differed from the guidance given by the RSC in introductory material, demonstrating the ability of students to speak, as Wozniak words it, ‘appropriately about Shakespeare’ without the need for tutoring (204). Twitter represented the potential for students to exert agency over these experiences but an anxiety over ‘inappropriate’ lines of discussion and a rigid Q&A format meant that this agency was curbed and controlled by the RSC, resulting in the illusion of interactivity; the way in which students’ communications on Twitter influenced the broadcast itself remained firmly within the RSC’s control. Relaxing the anxiety around young people’s reception of Shakespeare, trusting in their ability to spectate and speak about Shakespeare with

less direction, and letting new forms of (digital) spectatorship evolve, seems central to recognising and encouraging agency and empowering student audiences in these experiences.

Conclusion: Teaching Shakespeare, Teaching Spectatorship, Teaching Value

By exploring Schools' Broadcasts at the point of reception, this chapter has found that such broadcasts create multiple experiences that are shaped by the educational contexts in which they are encountered. Observing broadcasts in two different schools has revealed that beyond being an exercise in brand recognition, school broadcasts operate in complicated interpretative frameworks where there are multiple and competing demands for student attention. Like the cinema broadcast reception described in Chapter 1, reception in schools is not a direct process in which audiences passively receive content from a theatre company. Instead, reception is mediated, most obviously here by teachers, who, like screening venues, act as cultural brokers or intermediaries, determining how students value and experience the broadcasts. As this chapter has explored, these are experiences marked by the way in which different agents – including theatre companies, corporate sponsors, and teachers – seek to control student attention, with students themselves having relatively little agency over their own experiences.

The fact that RSC Education are not the only ones responsible for determining value in these experiences offers a potential source of hope for critics who are sceptical about the commercial and neoliberal motivations of such educational programmes. Whilst it is important, especially as their influence in

schools increases, that the involvement of theatre companies and their sponsors in Shakespeare education continues to be interrogated and questioned, it is also essential that the way these programmes and products actually get used by teachers and students is taken into consideration.[33] Whilst the teachers I observed were not necessarily directly resistant to attempts by the RSC to shape experience and value, they did both use the broadcasts in different ways, demonstrating different ideas about the value of watching Shakespeare. Neither school prepared for or used the broadcasts in the RSC's 'ideal' way, with time pressures and the needs of the particular student groups determining how teachers drew on the extra material provided by RSC Education. Whilst the RSC exerted control over reception by restricting the availability of the stream and providing introductory material and live Q&As, teachers also exerted agency by providing their own introductions and preparation activities, talking over the broadcast, and muting the stream.

Whilst the observations highlight the agency teachers had in these broadcasts, they provide a less optimistic picture about the ability students had to control their own attention and experiences. Geoffrey Way has suggested that through live Q&As and the use of Twitter, the RSC Schools' Broadcasts engage students by 'having them become active participants' in their experiences (2017: 397). The 'interactive, hypermediated aspects of the broadcasts', he writes, distinguish the Schools' Broadcasts from cinema schemes such as NT Live by 'focusing not just on bringing performances to remote audiences, but actively

[33] That the involvement of theatre companies in schools will increase has been predicted by Joe Winston who suggests that the decline of local authority programmes for teachers means that schools will 'increasingly need to turn to external agencies' and that 'the educational role of large, prestigious and influential arts organizations such as the RSC is bound to become increasingly significant' (2015: 159).

engaging them to participate in the theatrical event' (400). This chapter has demonstrated that, in practice, the forms of agency, participation and interaction available to students in these experiences are limited. Rather than being active participants in their experiences, students are doubly controlled by the RSC and by teachers, both of whom seek to define the limits of their participation. Whilst students' use of Twitter did offer a platform for them to speak confidently about Shakespeare without being subject to interpretation, it was only used by a small percentage of students, and only available to those who were given permission by their teachers and who were familiar with the platform. Moreover, the Q&A format meant that any type of engagement that fell outside of the RSC's definitions of suitability, was largely ignored.

In this, RSC Education's current use of Twitter seems to be a missed opportunity to genuinely empower students to speak about Shakespeare and actively participate. Although creating a temporally synchronous community of reception, or 'the world's biggest Shakespeare classroom' was a distinguishing element of the RSC Schools' Broadcasts, the actual ways in which students related to the wider audience in the observations further challenges ideas about the role of community in theatrical experiences. Physically present communities tended to be valued over remote communities, and, as with cinema reception, the sense of participation in a wider community of reception was strongest when that community was imagined. When students from different schools did communicate through Twitter, they bonded mostly over shared comments and jokes rather than analysis or discussion, indicating that the forms of community and communication the broadcasts actually fostered did not always necessarily form in the way the RSC might have envisaged.

The way that theatres such as the RSC and the NT are attempting to access the classroom through digital distribution is a sign of how important the school is as a site for determining value for young (and potentially future) audiences. For the majority of their student audiences, these broadcasts are likely to be among their first encounters with Shakespeare in performance. If value is a process, and if it is possible that where you watch changes how you value what you watch, then these broadcasts represent key experiences around which ideas about valuing and viewing Shakespeare in performance are formed. These observations suggest that the ideas about value created by these experiences are partly dependent on how teachers frame the broadcasts as work or leisure. Certainly, however, watching in a school, especially during normal school hours, creates an unavoidable association between Shakespeare performance and education; the two experiences discussed in this chapter tended to reinforce the sense that watching Shakespeare (especially performed by the RSC) was, if not an 'elite' activity, then a privileged and prestigious act of learning.

This research provides a relatively narrow snapshot of reception at just two secondary schools and so is limited, not only in what it can tell us about reception across different types of school and of different types of school broadcast, but also in what it can conclude about the lasting impact of these broadcasts on altering how students might continue to value Shakespeare in performance going forward. Students have been encountering Shakespeare performance at school for many years, and there is certainly evidence in the other chapters of this thesis that an early association between Shakespeare and education can influence how audiences subsequently approach and value their encounters with Shakespeare performance. Many of the responses from audiences of Shakespeare broadcasts in venues and

online demonstrate how ideas formed at school can inform future attitudes towards Shakespeare reception, and it might be reasonable to assume therefore that these broadcasts will have some lasting influence on how their audiences will engage with Shakespeare in the future.

Whilst this research suggests that students had relatively little agency to shape either experience or value in these encounters, it is difficult to predict how this will translate to their future encounters with Shakespeare. Whether teaching Shakespearean spectatorship through broadcasts is a positive move, giving students the confidence to 'take possession of the cultural forms on offer on their own terms and in their own right' (Reason, 2010: 30), or a negative one, positioning young audiences as 'participating in an elite activity' (Wozniak, 2016: 132), reinforcing ideas about Shakespeare's cultural value and limiting the agency of young audiences to shape new models of theatrical value, ultimately remains a matter of debate. What is evident, however, is that as schemes using theatre broadcasts in schools proliferate, the school will become an increasingly important focus for future research into the reception of Shakespeare in performance. School broadcasts not only teach students about watching Shakespeare in the theatre, but train them in digital modes of spectatorship of the kind described in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3. It may be that as new kinds of digital engagement develop, in which audiences have a greater degree of agency, young people will forge different kinds of relationships with Shakespeare, which companies such as the RSC will need to accommodate if they are to build new audiences.

In the next chapter, I explore what some of these new modes of participation might look like as I turn to examine the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts online. Whilst both forms of broadcast encounter discussed so far have, to some degree,

replicated theatrical modes of spectatorship by involving a group of people watching together in the same space at the same time in a specific context of reception, online encounters further fragment the theatrical experience by enabling audiences to experience theatre across potentially infinite sites of reception. Developing the themes of agency, community, and value that have emerged across the previous two chapters, the following chapter explores how online audiences have negotiated being physically and temporally distant, not only from the originating production, but from each other. Their responses, I argue, challenge ideas about the value of 'communal' spectatorship, raising questions about what might 'count' as a theatrical experience in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 3 - Online Encounters: Streamed Shakespeare and the Audience

Alongside broadcasts to cinemas and to schools, a number of Shakespeare productions were streamed online between 2012 and 2018, taking advantage of the expanding and continually developing ways in which the internet has come to function as a site of media reception. Intended to reach an even wider audience than that of the cinema, these productions harnessed new livestreaming technologies to distribute full performances for audiences to access, usually for free, via the devices of their choice. Online reception of theatre broadcasts differs in a number of key ways from reception in commercial screening venues or schools. Audiences are able to watch wherever they have internet access, meaning that they are not only geographically removed from the live production, but also from each other. Many online platforms also allow audiences to pause and play live material, to rewind and track, or to watch on catch-up, with audiences able to control (within defined parameters) not only where but when and how they watch productions. Although geographical and temporal dispersion mean that online experiences of theatre are not necessarily communal ones, streaming platforms with comment functions and the ability to use social media whilst watching create other ways for audiences to respond and communicate with each other. As I demonstrate in this chapter, the alternative ways of participating with theatre enabled by online broadcasts mean that 'watching online' constitutes a distinct way of encountering Shakespeare in performance.

The rise of online theatre streaming is related to, and part of, the much wider impact that digital technologies have had on how audiences access and consume

media. Over the past two decades the development of subscription streaming and video-on-demand (VOD) services such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video have made the internet a central location for accessing and watching television and film content. In their introduction to a collection of essays examining the 'Netflix effect', Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey point to the huge effect that Netflix has had on relationships between audiences and producers of media content, stating that (as of 2016) the service had 'well over 65 million subscribers worldwide' and that 'Netflix accounts for up to one-third of North American Internet traffic at any given time' (McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, 2016: 1). In the UK, audience familiarity with VOD has been further developed by platforms such as BBC iPlayer, which was first launched in 2007 and allows audiences to catch-up with programmes shown across the BBC's channels, usually for up to 30 days after they are broadcast. Most major channels in the UK now have an online catch-up service, adding to, and perhaps replacing, digital video recording technologies (DVR) such as Sky+ and TiVo, which audiences have been using to pause, play and record live television since the turn of the twenty-first century. Untethered to a schedule of programming, contemporary audiences are accustomed to being able to watch whatever they want, whenever they want, and wherever they want to watch it.

These services have given rise to new ways of engaging with and consuming media, and subsequently, to concerns about the quality of the experiences that they provide. Debates around the practice of 'binge-watching' –in which an audience member watches multiple episodes of a series in one sitting – is one obvious example of the anxieties that surround new modes of online spectatorship. Fuelled by streaming services which make entire series available to watch at once, concerns have been raised that intensive 'binge-watching' can have harmful effects on

cognition and physical health (Snider, 2016). A number of media scholars have countered these anxieties, exploring the potentially positive aspects of binge-watching such as the enhancement of narrative (McCormick, 2016) and of social bonds between audience members (Matrix, 2014). Similarly, media scholars have also begun to challenge the negative connotations associated with the 'distracted' modes of participation that online viewing enables. As well as content being available to watch online, internet-enabled mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets can be used as 'second screens', creating new ways of interacting with television, cinema, and even theatre broadcasts.[34] Second-screen activity may consist of directly interacting with a particular show (by voting online, for example), live-tweeting alongside a television programme, or looking up information about actors or plot lines whilst watching. Whilst some consider these to be distracted behaviours that devalue an otherwise focused and immersive experience, with the act of distraction even posited as psychologically damaging (Gazzaley and Rosen, 2016), others have explored how they might increase engagement with the media product or connect audience members with one another (Blake, 2017).

Second-screen experiences such as live-tweeting are intensified by media events that are broadcast live, and are often encouraged with official hashtags promoted on screen. The continued value of liveness is reflected in the recent surge of online platforms that enable and promote live online experiences. YouTube introduced a livestreaming feature in 2012, making use of it to livestream much of the London 2012 Olympic games. Facebook has more recently followed suit, and

[34] I explore how the smartphone is used as a second screen, albeit as an audio rather than visual source of information, in my discussion of NT Live's audio commentary for their encore cinema screening of *Coriolanus* (2014). The commentary was available via the NT Live app and was designed to be played through headphones in the cinema. See Nicholas (2018) pp. 79-84.

integrated its ‘Facebook Live’ feature in 2016. These features allow users to livestream cheaply and easily from anywhere using their mobile devices, and also allow audiences to comment on and react to streams in real time, marking a convergence of ‘first’ and ‘second’ screens. They demonstrate the value placed on capturing the attention of a ‘live’ audience, as well as the growing appetite for live content, despite the prevalence of an on-demand media landscape.

Online broadcasts of Shakespeare both emerge out of, and constitute, a part of this changed landscape of media production, distribution and reception. Live broadcast platforms have made it possible for theatre organisations to live stream their Shakespeare productions online, and VOD services have primed audiences for watching online. In this chapter, I am interested in the kinds of spectatorship that these online theatre broadcasts enable. I have previously argued that audience experiences with online theatre broadcasts are determined by the specific hybrid mix of technologies utilised or drawn upon in each individual broadcast (Nicholas, 2018). Responding to my own call for further critical enquiry into audience experiences, I conducted an online survey that asked audiences of online Shakespeare streams about their experiences, following this up with in-depth interviews. Here I explore what insight the results of this research can provide about how audiences are encountering and engaging with Shakespeare through online streams, their motivations for watching, and what they valued about their experiences.

Talking to audiences has prompted a shift in my initial thinking around online audience experiences. Although technologies are an important factor in shaping these experiences, I found that in practice they were not the only, and often not the most important, factor in determining how audiences experienced streams online. Rather, experiences were shaped by a number of factors in conversation with each

other, not least by audiences themselves, who had an increased role to play in shaping their experiences online. Two audience members interacting with the same production and utilising the same hybrid mix of technologies may have two very different experiences.

In this chapter I examine how audiences approached watching online Shakespeare broadcasts, looking at how they negotiated and manipulated elements of theatrical spectatorship by working in relation to technologies, productions, social media, distribution strategies, and other ways of viewing Shakespeare, to shape their online experiences. I begin by introducing the methodology used and the respondents surveyed, before contextualising the results by sketching out the development of online Shakespeare broadcasts between 2012 and 2017. Drawing on the survey and interview responses, I then examine how audiences actually approached watching the broadcasts online. Firstly, I explore how they negotiated the altered temporalities of online theatre, specifically looking at how audiences negotiated 'liveness' and how they organised their experiences through time. I then focus on how being geographically separate, not only from the theatre venue but from other audience members, impacted audiences' experiences. I address both the spaces in which audiences watched and the ways that they communicated with one another, especially through social media. Emphasising the diversity of online experiences, I conclude by examining how ideas about Shakespeare's value functioned in these experiences, and discuss what the results suggest about how watching online might be altering how audiences value theatre and Shakespeare.

Methodology and Respondents

In order to find out how audiences have been engaging with online Shakespeare broadcasts, I conducted an online audience survey and follow-up interviews. The online survey was designed to ask audiences about their experiences as audiences of previous Shakespeare broadcasts, and they were asked to select which broadcasts they had seen from a given list in order to ensure their answers were related to broadcasts, rather than other recorded theatre available online (see Appendix 5 for a table of the online Shakespeare broadcasts included). Previous investigations into theatre broadcast audiences, such as Arts Council England's *Live-to-Digital* report, have often been primarily concerned with discerning 'differences in quality of experience' (Reidy *et al*., 2016: 23) between theatre and digital experiences, or in calculating the impact of live-to-digital work on attendance at live performance. Whilst I share an interest with the *Live-to-Digital* report about who is engaging with theatre online, and why they do so, I wanted to drill down into *how* audiences were engaging with online theatre and what they valued about those experiences. The survey therefore asked questions in six categories (see Appendix 2 for a full list of survey questions):

1. The productions they had seen and their motivations for watching
2. How they watched – including who they watched with and if they watched live or not
3. What they did before, during and after watching productions
4. Their experiences of watching productions, including emotional connection and absorption
5. Their experiences with Shakespeare in performance more generally

6. Demographic questions

The survey was distributed online via my own Twitter and Facebook networks. The link to the survey was shared on Twitter by a number of the theatre companies who have livestreamed work, including Cheek by Jowl and 1623 Theatre Company, as well as by a number of other accounts. Unlike the audience research conducted for the *Live-to-Digital* report, which only surveyed audience members attending a live theatre or cinema production, my survey's online distribution meant that there was some chance of reaching audience members whose only engagement with Shakespeare in performance has been online.

However, the respondents to the survey were determined by the reach of my own personal and social network, which is heavily comprised of those interested in theatre and/or Shakespeare, and academics. Out of 75 respondents, just four had never seen Shakespeare performed live, and only three had not seen a live performance of any work in the last 12 months. Overall, the respondents were regular theatre-goers, and when asked to select up to three statements most relevant to themselves from a list, 78% of respondents reported themselves to be 'a Shakespeare lover', the same number 'a theatre enthusiast', and 69% declared that they had 'an academic interest in theatre or Shakespeare'. Respondents were also generally familiar with accessing Shakespeare across a range of media, including via DVD, cinema, television, and online. Demographically, almost 75% of respondents identified as female, and there was little diversity within race and ethnicity, with all but four identifying as white. Age groups showed more diversity, with respondents

across all age ranges, apart from the over 75s.[35] Of the respondents, 31% were between 25-34 years of age, making it the most represented group. Whilst 62% of the respondents lived in the UK, the survey attracted a number of international responses, the majority of which were based in the USA. There were also respondents based in Australia, Canada, Finland, Japan, France, Germany, Spain, Russia and the Netherlands.

The relative homogeny of the respondent demographics tells us more about the difficulty of reaching people outside of one's own network than it can about the composition of the online Shakespeare audience in general. The sample size of the survey is far too small to be representative of the Shakespeare livestreaming audience and quantitatively assessing the effectiveness of online streams in reaching new and diverse audiences is beyond the scope of this study. Keeping in mind how the respondents were recruited is also important. Since respondents were likely to have found the link to the survey via social media it is reasonable to assume that many of them are regular and active users of social media platforms, and are therefore potentially more likely to engage with those platforms as part of their viewing experience than the audience for online streams in general. It is easy to overestimate the importance of platforms such as Twitter and Facebook when describing online broadcast experiences because they are so accessible to researchers, and recruiting respondents via those sites may mean that responses are further skewed towards users of social media. Asking audiences about their experiences rather than relying on the content of public posts goes some way to countering this skew; as I discuss below in relation to how audiences communicate,

[35] The survey was only open to those over the age of 18 in line with ethics approval.

although social media was an important part of respondents' viewing practices, other 'invisible' methods of communicating were also used, with audiences privately messaging each other whilst they watched, and talking face-to-face with others about the stream after the event.

Whilst the survey results cannot be used to describe audiences in general terms, they provide interesting and useful insights into why and how audiences are experiencing Shakespeare in performance online. Follow-up interviews with four survey respondents also helped to provide further nuance around audience practices, motivations and values. Interviews were all conducted online, with interviewees given the option of the platform via which the interview was conducted, as well as whether they wanted to set at a specific time for the interview or reply to questions as and when it was convenient. As it negated the need to be physically or temporally co-present, this interviewing format allowed me to interview international audiences in different time zones, and meant that responses to questions were often very detailed, providing rich insight and reflection on what it means to be an audience of online Shakespeare. Details of the format of each interview are detailed in Table 1 below for reference. To retain anonymity, names have been changed.

Table 1: Online interviewees and interview formats

Name	**Country**	**Platform**	**Method**	**Dates**
Anja	Finland	Facebook Messenger	Synchronous	09/03/18 and 23/03/18
Michael	UK	Email	Synchronous	22/03/18 to 24/03/18
Marie	France	Email	Asynchronous	14/03/18 to 09/04/18
Jenny	Australia	Twitter Direct Message	Asynchronous	22/03/18 to 27/03/18

The Development of Online Shakespeare Broadcasts 2012 – 2017

Between 2012 and 2017, thirteen Shakespeare productions were made freely available to online audiences.[36] These productions represent a range of distribution strategies, from productions that were recorded, streamed, and only available to watch as they happened (e.g. Forced Entertainment's *Complete Works*), to those that were streamed live but were also available to watch on catch-up for a specified period or time (e.g. Cheek by Jowl's *Measure for Measure*), to pre-recorded productions that were later made available to watch for a limited time period (e.g. RSC's *Richard II* or Talawa Theatre Company's *King Lear*). Whilst archived recordings of other Shakespeare productions were available online via pay-per-view and subscription platforms such as Digital Theatre and Globe Player during this period, I excluded these from the list of productions in the survey. The line between these kinds of recording and the online streams is not clearly defined – a few respondents mentioned Digital Theatre productions in the 'other' category suggesting that they do not distinguish between them, and some productions overlap having later been made available on such platforms – but here I wanted specifically to explore productions where online distribution was positioned as a 'live' event, and the particular ways of attending to, engaging with, and valuing theatre that they created.

[36] Although I have made every attempt to find out about all the Shakespeare productions streamed online during this period, my own awareness of streams – much like that of the audiences I surveyed – has been circumscribed by social and theatrical networks, and search engine algorithms, meaning it is highly possible that there have been others that I have missed. A list of online Shakespeare streams included in the survey is detailed in Appendix 5.

The earliest online Shakespeare streams listed on the survey are the 2012 Globe to Globe Festival productions. Enabled by funding for the Cultural Olympiad as part of the London 2012 Olympic Games, thirty-two of the thirty-six productions that comprised the festival were broadcast from Shakespeare's Globe via The Space, a temporary online platform launched by the BBC and Arts Council England to capture and distribute the cultural works involved in the Olympiad. The 2012 London Olympics were a significant moment not just for the digital distribution of theatre but for streaming technologies more generally. The opening ceremony was streamed live online, showcasing YouTube's new livestreaming function, and the investment in technology was a key legacy of the games. After 2012, The Space continued to function as both an online platform and a commissioning programme, with one of its three grant-awarding areas focused on digital capture and live broadcast, and a number of Shakespeare streams have since been commissioned by the company.

Online streaming made the Globe to Globe productions, each of which was performed by a theatre company from a different country in their own language, freely and digitally available to a global Olympic audience.[37] Like screening initiatives such as NT Live, online broadcasts are partly motivated by pressure to increase access to theatre and the arts and to reach wider and more diverse audiences. The 2015 Warwick Commission report states that modes of digital distribution and engagement such as livestreaming could be a potential way of

[37] On the Globe to Globe Festival see Susan Bennett and Christie Carson (eds.) (2013) *Shakespeare Beyond English: A Global Experiment*. See Paul Edmonson, Paul Prescott and Erin Sullivan (eds.) (2015) *A Year of Shakespeare: Re-Living the World Shakespeare Festival* and Paul Prescott and Erin Sullivan (eds.) (2013) *Shakespeare on the Global Stage: Performance and Festivity in the Olympic Year* on the World Shakespeare Festival as a whole.

addressing the inequalities around who gets to access and engage with culture paid for in part by the taxpayer, pointing out that an 'increasing number of arts, cultural and heritage organisations are exploiting the possibilities offered by new digital technologies to develop, reach and communicate with audiences in innovative and creative ways' (Neelands *et al*., 2015: 56).

The 2016 *Live-to-Digital* report is one of the only theatre-industry reports to focus on online modes of distribution and reception and provides some early evidence that online broadcasts may be helping to widen access to theatre, finding that those who streamed theatre online were 'younger and more diverse than live theatre and Event Cinema audiences' (Reidy *et al*., 2016: 11). This could reflect the fact that online broadcasts tend to involve fewer barriers to participation than attending at the theatre or cinema. Online streams are usually free to access for audiences, no travel arrangements need to be made or costs incurred, no childcare organised, and, if the stream is available on catch-up, audiences can fit watching the stream around their commitments and plans. 60% of respondents to my own survey indicated that watching online was *the only way* they could have possibly seen a production, and 50% said that they had wanted to watch the production in the theatre but could not attend due to distance and/or time pressures. These results reinforce the idea that the convenience of online streams allows those who are unable to access a production live for any reason the opportunity to engage with it.

However, removing the geographical, financial, temporal and emotional barriers associated with theatre or cinema attendance does not necessarily result in larger, newer, or more diverse audiences. The respondents to my own survey were not especially diverse, and (for the potential reasons that I discuss in the methodology section above) they were largely seasoned theatregoers, already

invested in watching Shakespeare in performance via a range of media. 23% of respondents were not even new audiences for the production they watched online, indicating that they had seen the production live and wanted to experience it again. Although my survey was not large enough to be representative of the livestreaming audience as a whole, the *Live-to-Digital* report also found that whilst streamers were younger and more diverse than theatre and cinema audiences, they were also 'slightly more likely to attend live cultural performances more frequently than the average theatregoer' (Reidy *et al*., 2016: 12). Again, this suggests that whilst streaming might be a good additional way for those already regularly attending theatre to access more productions, it is not a particularly effective way of engaging new audiences.[38] The limitations of digital distribution for increasing access are reiterated in the 2018 'Culture is Digital' report, in which the UK's Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) set out its policy commitments concerning digital technology and the arts.[39] Citing their advisor on research and evidence, Professor Simeon Yates, the report points to 'a strong association between cultural exclusion (visiting a cultural venue) and digital exclusion (being online)' signalling that some parts of the population are 'being "double served" by physical and digital cultural offerings' whilst others remain doubly excluded (DCMS, 2018: 21). As the DCMS report puts it, 'simply making digital content available does not mean that audiences will automatically engage' (21).

[38] This result may have been shaped by the fact that this report only surveyed audiences attending a live theatre performance or a cinema broadcast, so audiences who may only have engaged with theatre online were not represented.

[39] Importantly, the Warwick Commission report also points out the limitations of digital projects for reaching new audiences, highlighting that 'increased levels of digital engagement have not by themselves led to greater access to and participation […] for some individuals and groups' including those without internet access or with inadequate or low-quality internet access, and those with low levels of confidence in internet use (Neelands *et al.,* 2015: 58).

As these reports suggest, digital distribution presents its own barriers to participation. As well as having access to an internet-enabled device and a fairly good internet connection (see Neelands *et al*., 2015: 58), audiences tend to need to be part of already-established networks to find out about online theatre streams. The way that audiences find out about content online is increasingly circumscribed by a combination of their own social media networks and algorithms designed to provide users with content that they are likely to be interested in. 60% of my survey respondents had found out about an online Shakespeare stream via Twitter, and a further 23% via Facebook, methods that rely on participation in existing networks. Online broadcasts are often only announced a few weeks in advance, and are not publicised particularly well beyond social networks and email newsletters, meaning that opportunities for those not already invested in rituals of theatregoing to find out about streams are limited. Despite their digital 'availability', online streams can work as 'narrowcasts', targeting niche, rather than wide, audiences. Indeed, the low point of entry for online streams can paradoxically work *against* building a wide audience. As Peter Kirwan notes, without the monetary buy-in of cinema screenings, livestreams can 'hope for an audience many times that of a cinema with finite capacity, but [they] cannot assume that the audience will show up, nor that they will stay' (2018: 162).

With no concrete financial transactions taking place, online streams rely on different kinds of 'buy-in' or investment from audiences. For my survey respondents, Shakespeare was an attraction that led them to commit to watching the streams: 50% of respondents watched because it was a performance of a particular play and 53% specifically because it was a production of a Shakespeare play. The most popular motivation for watching online, however, was to see the work of the

particular theatre company. The public profile of the theatre company, along with brand loyalty to that profile, can play a large part in creating audiences for both online streams and cinema broadcasts.

This can result in what Jami Rogers describes as a 'lack of a level playing field in terms of audience size' between Shakespeare broadcasts (2018: 157). Rogers points out that the online stream of Black Theatre Live's *Hamlet* (2016) attracted a modest audience of 1000 over the two weeks that it was available, a tiny number in comparison to the numbers that attend productions broadcast by NT Live. In order to boost the profile of their streams and reach a wider audience, a number of the companies who have streamed their Shakespearean work online have partnered with media platforms or broadcasting companies, such as the BBC, to aid distribution. The production seen by most of my survey respondents, Shakespeare's Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016), was streamed online as part of the digital festival 'Shakespeare Lives', curated by the BBC and the British Council, and was available for catch-up viewing on BBC iPlayer in the UK and on the Shakespeare Lives website internationally. The Globe already has a large, dedicated audience, but the same distribution strategy also helped lesser-known Talawa Theatre Company reach larger audiences with their production of *King Lear* (2016). As well as appearing on iPlayer and the Shakespeare Lives website, the production was broadcast on BBC 4 on Christmas Day 2016 and attracted 280,000 views in total (Rogers, 2018: 157). Partnerships with the BBC, especially as part of curated seasons, not only benefit from its status as a trusted media brand with a large audience, but from the habitual use by an increasingly large segment of the UK population of BBC iPlayer for catching up on television. Each user has a personalised account, with the platform recommending content to users based on

what they have previously watched, potentially increasing the chance that new and non-theatregoing audiences will engage with the production.

The BBC has played a major part in the development of online Shakespeare streams, either via funding through The Space, or through distribution partnerships. Other companies have turned to alternative media brands to help promote and distribute their streams. Cheek by Jowl's *Measure for Measure* (2015) which was produced with the Pushkin Theatre, Moscow and was performed in Russian with English surtitles (converted to subtitles for the stream) was hosted on YouTube Live and embedded into Cheek by Jowl's own website. Additionally, it was hosted on the website of *The Telegraph* newspaper. Peter Kirwan writes that no money changed hands in the company's partnership with *The Telegraph* (2018: 164), indicating that these partnerships were mutually beneficial. In practical terms, Cheek by Jowl benefitted from increased exposure and publicity, and the newspaper benefitted from increased traffic to their website. The screenshot below (Fig. 19) of *The Telegraph* website was taken just before the *Measure for Measure* stream on 22 April 2015 and shows adverts for Google, Thompson Cruises, and the Telegraph Box Office surrounding the theatre stream window, and links to other parts of the website, demonstrating the opportunities that directing viewers to this site would have both for self-promotion and boosting advertising revenue.

There is also a trade in terms of cultural capital. The choice of *The Telegraph* – a conservative publication whose print readership is predominantly over 65 and middle class – is an interesting one for Cheek by Jowl.[40] There seems to be little

[40] According to Newsworks, as of May 2018, 55% of *Daily Telegraph* print readers were over 65, and 71% of readers for print and online combined were over 35. 78% of readers for online and print were classed in being in the ABC1 (broadly taken to mean middle-class) social demographic. Source: https://www.newsworks.org.uk/the-daily-telegraph (Accessed: 10 September 2019).

chance that the production would find a new or more diverse audience via *The Telegraph,* and indeed they may have been hoping to tap into the newspaper's older, theatregoing readership. *The Telegraph* on the other hand, may have been keen to attract Cheek by Jowl's slightly younger audience and to trade on an association with an established brand seen as creating relevant and challenging theatre. Cheek by Jowl moved away from *The Telegraph* for their stream of *The Winter's Tale* two years later, and expanded their distribution network further by giving audiences the option of watching the stream in English, French or Spanish (subtitled) with the YouTube stream embedded on the websites of Spanish newspaper *El Pais*, the French cultural magazine *Télérama,* and Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald*. The stream was also produced in association with The Space and in the UK was available via the BBC's iPlayer for 30 days. This European distribution network helped bolster non-UK audiences, whilst also cementing Cheek by Jowl's reputation as an international brand producing work in a number of languages.

Similar distribution models were tested out by Forced Entertainment for their first livestream of *Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare* in 2015. Over the course of nine days, single actors narrated the plot of each of Shakespeare plays in hour-long performances, using a wooden table as the set and common household objects to represent characters. Three or four plays were covered in the course of an evening, allowing remote viewers to dip in and out over the length of the series. The stream was available on the company's website, with a selected number of performances also featured on the website of *The Guardian*. The partnership provided exposure for the stream, with Artistic Director Tim Etchells also writing a piece about the production for the independent theatre criticism blog *Exuent*. However, as I have discussed elsewhere and elaborate on below, this distribution

strategy may have been more successful at attracting audiences who were familiar with theatre than attracting new and more diverse audiences, with the Twitter conversation surrounding the streams dominated by theatre critics and scholars (Nicholas, 2018: 84-89). Whilst the various media partnerships used for online Shakespeare broadcasts such as those with *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and the BBC can be seen as ways of promoting streams, they are not neutral ways of reaching audiences, and can shape the audience in ways that can be exclusive as well as inclusive.

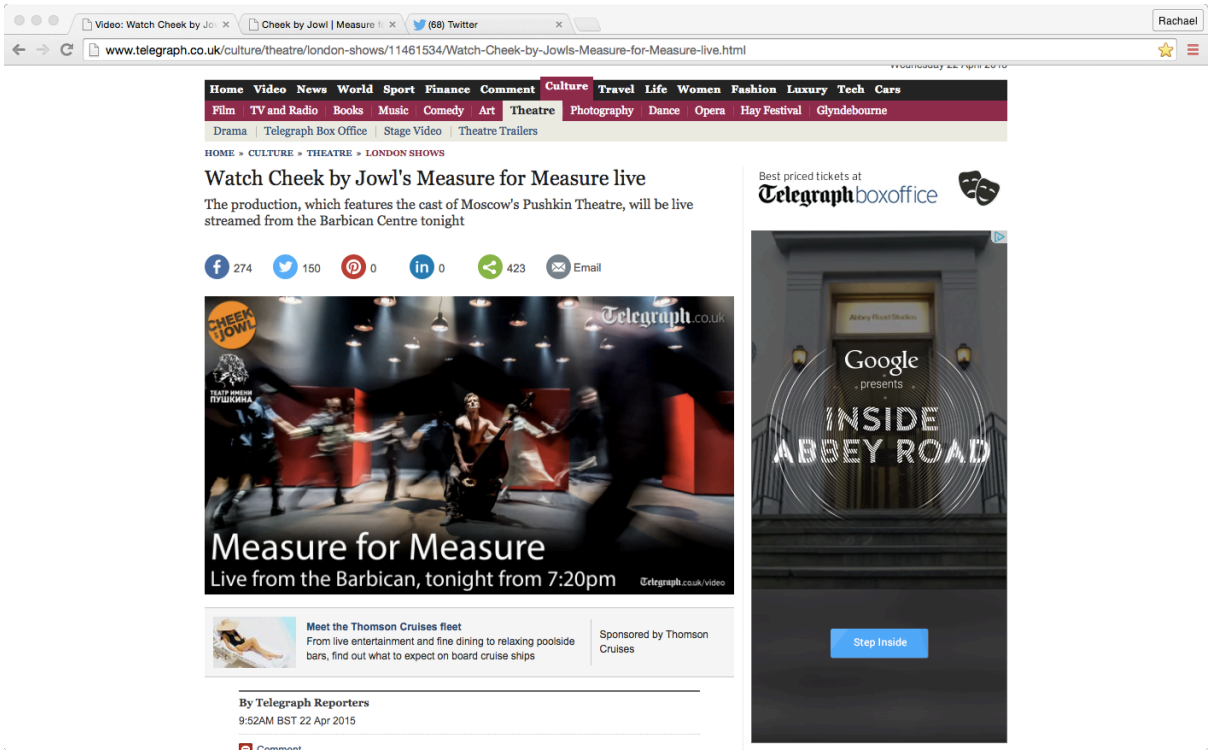

Figure 19: The landing page for Cheek by Jowl's livestream of Measure for Measure on Telegraph.co.uk; screenshot taken by the author, 22 April 2015.

Online broadcasts, then, face a paradox in terms of access. Theoretically, they make theatre more accessible but, in practice, the task of reaching audiences is beset with a host of additional challenges. The reach of an online stream and its

audience is determined, and limited, by a number of factors including who has access to technology, the nature of the content, the personal, professional and online networks through which the stream is marketed, and the media partnerships put in place to distribute it. However, the Shakespeare streams discussed in this chapter have not been solely motivated by a desire to increase access to new and diverse audiences. Online streaming has also been used as a form of controlling the digital circulation of theatrical work, as a way of creating archives for future audiences, of extending the social impact of a production, and of advertising or generating interest in a particular production or company.

Like broadcasts to cinemas and schools, the large-scale, remote access made possible by digital media places strain on the importance attributed to experiencing performance in the physical space of the theatre, prompting Shakespeare institutions and theatres to reimagine their relationship to their audiences. Recognising that 'attendance is no longer a prerequisite for experience', Ryan Nelson, former Digital Manager at Shakespeare's Globe, has explained that the filming of productions for cinema and online distribution prompted 'a move to provide meaningful digital experiences that can stand apart from any real-world experience and act as a viable alternative for those who cannot access the physical space' (Nelson, 2014: 207). Nelson reveals that whilst these digital experiences are undoubtedly a benefit for remote audiences, they also perform a role for the Globe's brand. He writes that the streaming of the Globe to Globe Festival created 'a complicated narrative journey' in which the Globe's cultural authority was 'simultaneously diffused and reinforced' (208). Nelson argues that whilst broadcasting can potentially undermine the value of being physically present within the Globe theatre, it also reinforces the idea that the Globe is a source of cultural

authority and of high-quality Shakespearean performance. This aligns with Kate Rumbold's argument that broadcasting is a way of reinforcing the cultural importance of the institution. Writing before the advent of online broadcasts, she suggests that the 'Globe on Screen' programme and the RSC's studio adaptation of *Hamlet* (2009) presented 'the remediation of their work by other, newer media forms as their own, deliberate appropriation of broadcast technology to extend the physical space of the stage – reclaiming value for the institution' (Rumbold, 2010: 328).

Similarly, online streaming can be a way of 'reclaiming value' for institutions as digital technologies develop and audiences find new ways of distributing and sharing work online. Speaking more generally of the Globe's digital strategies, Nelson points out that audiences tweeting or uploading photos to social media happens without the Globe's involvement, and that by 'harnessing that activity on its own platforms, the Globe is seen to be encouraging a polyphonic discussion, at the same time as it bolsters its own role as the generator and moderator of such debate' (208-9). In this, Nelson echoes Rumbold's claim that by 'co-opting the kinds of digital activities that the public perform independently of them', institutions connect value to their work and that by doing so they 'perform double maneuvers that efface their traditional role as cultural gatekeepers and reassert their importance as mediators of cultural experiences' (2010: 328; 315). By streaming online, institutions connect with the new ways that audiences are creating and consuming media via livestreaming on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, as well as via catch-up platforms. Whilst making institutions appear open and accessible, streaming also allows them to exert control over how their content is shared and consumed, reducing the incentive for

audiences to create their own unofficial recordings of productions.[41] It also allows theatres to reaffirm their own importance and authority in facilitating encounters with Shakespeare performance, even whilst creating experiences which omit the necessity of visiting the theatre in person. Furthermore, by being branded as 'official', the digital experiences that they create are bestowed with an authority, authenticity and quality. Nelson's choice of phrasing is significant here – the Globe are not just creating digital experiences but *meaningful* digital experiences, implying a hierarchy in which the Globe's digital content stands above and apart from the online content that is created by audiences or fans, as well as from other digital experiences that are unconnected to the stage.

In controlling how their theatre productions are recorded, circulated and received online, Shakespeare institutions also make an intervention in the way that those productions are digitally archived, and how those archives are monetised. The Globe has been able to re-purpose the recordings made during the livestreaming of the Globe to Globe Festival as paid-for digital downloads via their online platform, Globe Player. Although this was a secondary use for the Globe, for some companies the archived performance that results from an online stream can be as important as reaching new audiences. Jami Rogers argues that this is particularly important for work by 'regional and minority-led companies' whose work has 'been erased simply by virtue of not being recorded' and for whom digital broadcasting can provide 'new opportunities for these organisations to ensure their work can claim a space in the historical narrative' (2018: 150). Writing about the livestreams from Tara Arts/Black

[41] The tensions created by fans filming live performances were especially evident during the 2015 live run of *Hamlet* at the Barbican starring Benedict Cumberbatch. The NT Live broadcast of the play can be seen as a way of curbing this behaviour as well as a way of profiting from the popularity of Cumberbatch; see Daisy Abbott and Claire Read (2017).

Theatre Live (*Macbeth* and *Hamlet,* 2016) and Talawa Theatre Company's *King Lear* (2016), Rogers asserts that the artistic directors of both companies, Michael Buffong and Jonathan Kennedy, used digital capture 'to create a space from which ethnic minority performers will no longer be excluded, marginalized and subsequently forgotten' (155). The recording of Talawa's *King Lear* has been subsequently made into a DVD, and is also accessible via digital databases of off-air content available to educational institutions in the UK via the Educational Recording Agency license. This means that it can continue to be circulated and used in classrooms, changing perspectives about the representation of BAME actors on stage, and in Shakespearean drama in particular.

Streamed Shakespeares can have agency as archived objects, creating lasting records of complete productions that can be reactivated and made to mean in different contexts. They can travel across different media, and, like the RSC's *Richard II* (2013) which was made available on BBC iPlayer and Shakespeare Lives in 2016, archived productions originally created as cinema broadcasts can be reincarnated as digital broadcasts. But online broadcasts can also be put to use in other ways by theatre companies. Derby-based 1623 Theatre Company streamed a pilot of their *King Lear* double-bill adaptation, *Lear/Cordelia,* on their website in 2016. The productions, which were based on a research-and-development project exploring '*King Lear* in the context of dementia through participatory research' (1623 Theatre Company), resituated the narrative into a modern-day care home, and foregrounded the story of Cordelia. As 1623 are a relatively small regional company without distribution partnerships in place, the *Lear/Cordelia* stream attracted a relatively small number of views in comparison to other streamed Shakespeares, but still provided a reach much larger than that of the Attenborough Arts Centre theatre

in Leicester where it was performed live. The recorded performance was a 'work-in-progress', not a 'finished' production, and the format allowed audiences to provide feedback to the company, including a Q&A with the directors between the plays, and another with a panel of theatre makers and dementia experts at the end, during which the live audience asked questions and shared their experiences of living with and caring for those with the disease. This opened up a dialogue with the audience, allowing them to feed into the continued development of the work. The livestream also worked as a promotional tool, linking to a crowdfunding campaign to help fund a tour of the production to studio theatres in England, currently set for 2021.

Streaming this pilot production performed a number of functions, including raising awareness of dementia, and potentially allowing those unable to attend because they suffer with, or care for someone suffering with, dementia to participate and be heard. Livestreaming was also used as a tool for activism by Belarus Free Theatre Company, who streamed *King Lear* (2015) from the Young Vic theatre. Originally staged as part of the Globe to Globe Festival, the production was part of their 'Staging a Revolution' festival, which sought to raise awareness of censorship in Belarus, as well as aiming to 'invigorate and inspire UK audiences to see themselves as positive change-makers' (Ministry of Counterculture, 2016). The festival performances, all of which were livestreamed, were followed by panel discussions with experts, artists, campaigners and activists, based around a theme linked to the performance. As the company articulate, the production explored experiences of tyranny and exile, 'drawing parallels between Lear's spiralling court and Belarusian society' (Ministry of Counterculture, 2016). In this, the stakes were high, with performers risking a potential prison sentence of two years for criticising Belarus from abroad. Although internet censorship is prevalent in Belarus,

livestreaming provided a possibility for audiences in Belarus to watch the performance, an act of political resistance in and of itself, as well as working to draw wider international attention to the human rights issues in Belarus.[42]

Increasing audience access in and of itself then, is rarely the sole reason for streaming, with Shakespeare streams motivated by a range of aims and objectives. By shifting the ways that audiences are able to engage with theatre, online streams have the potential to radically alter relationships between theatre companies, their productions, and audiences. This potential, however, is curbed by the fact that the internet is not an inherently open distribution system, with audience reach limited by networks, algorithms and internet availability, as well as by the investment by most Shakespearean theatre companies in particular (theatrical) modes of participation. Online streaming attempts to stake a claim for Shakespearean performance in an expanding landscape of digital reception but, by foregrounding the value of the stage experience, theatre companies also seek to differentiate theatre streams from other digital content, reinforcing their own cultural importance in the process. Moreover, by controlling how online audiences experience space through camerawork, by placing restrictions on when or for how long streams are available to watch, and by encouraging audiences to communicate in certain ways with each other, theatre companies have sought to privilege theatrical modes of spectatorship in their online experiences.

The degree of flexibility afforded by online platforms in choosing how to watch, however, means that, theoretically, audiences could be experiencing online broadcasts very differently to the ways envisaged by theatre companies. How have

[42] I discuss 1623 Theatre Company's *Lear/Cordelia* (2016) and Belarus Free Theatre's *King Lear* (2015) within the context of other theatre broadcast versions of *King Lear* in Nicholas (2019).

audiences actually engaged with Shakespeare streams, and have they experienced them as 'theatrical' in any way? How are the approaches that audiences are taking to watching online streams potentially altering the power relationships between theatre companies and their audiences? In what follows, I explore the results of my online survey and interviews with online audiences of Shakespeare streams in an attempt to address these questions. It is clear from the results that audiences are particularly active in shaping their own experiences with online broadcasts. In the first section below, I examine how audiences negotiated the temporal aspects of streaming, and in the second, I explore how audiences negotiated the spatial elements of their experiences.

Negotiating Time: Liveness and Beyond Liveness

In giving audiences the ability to choose whether they watch live or recorded, and whether they stop and start or watch continuously, online broadcasts can make a significant intervention in how a particular production is experienced through time. In this section I unpick the impact of those interventions, looking at how audiences approached, unravelled, and re-constructed theatrical time in their experiences of online Shakespeare broadcasts. I begin by examining the different ways audiences experienced and valued 'liveness' as part of their encounters with Shakespeare online, arguing that audiences are active in constructing a sense of 'liveness'. I then look at how audiences organised and managed time across their experiences, thinking about how watching on catch-up, stopping and starting, and only watching part of a production – modes of participation that are particular to the reception of online broadcasts – determines experience. I argue that the 'distracted' and partial

modes of viewing enabled by online broadcasts are valid approaches that should be considered as important encounters with Shakespeare in performance, rather than as a feature of online spectatorship that should be rectified or dismissed.

Experiences of 'Liveness' Online

The AEA *Live-to-Digital* report concluded that overall, audiences for Live-to-Digital work did not value 'liveness', writing that it 'does not drive demand for Live-to-Digital, nor affect the quality of the audience experience'. They found that whilst 47% of organisations supplying Live-to-Digital work thought that the fact that the event was occurring in real time was 'very important' to audiences, just 9% of audiences who streamed productions described the 'liveness' of the work as 'very important', and 20% as 'somewhat important' (Reidy *et al*., 2016: 13-14). In fact, they found that the biggest given motivation for streaming was the ability to access productions when the live performance was not available, making time and flexibility a greater motivation for streaming than avoiding the costs associated with venue attendance (13). The results of my survey generally reflect this apparent ambivalence towards liveness on the part of streaming audiences. 42% of respondents had not watched any Shakespeare streams live as they were broadcast, 39% had watched some live, and just 18% had watched all of their Shakespeare streams live. When asked to describe some of the factors that influenced their decisions to watch live or later, convenience was the most commonly given reason, with time differences and clashes with other commitments making watching on catch-up a more convenient option.

Whilst these results seem to confirm that online audiences place less value on 'liveness' than theatre organisations, the comments left by audience members in my survey point towards more complex negotiations between liveness and convenience. Some audience members articulated that they would have preferred to watch live if it were possible, and there was also evidence that watching live was strongly valued. One respondent reported that she had 'got up in the middle of the night to watch Measure for Measure so I could follow the Twitter stream of other people watching at the same time'. Other respondents also pointed to the way that watching live allowed them to participate in the unfolding online conversation, with one writing that it 'feels like more of an event when I watch it live […] I can live tweet if I wish, and read and react to the theatre audience's tweets in the interval'. In these responses, watching live *is* articulated as an important motivation, but primarily in relation to how watching live allows audiences to participate in a community of reception, rather than in terms of experiencing a generic sense of 'liveness'.

The value placed by these audiences on what another respondent termed 'the community nature of liveness' reflects Andy Lavender's argument that shared temporality, or 'the pull of attention and requirement for co-temporal engagement', is a key aspect of experiencing theatre online (Lavender, 2017: 352). Only making streams available during transmission can be used as a strategy for concentrating attention, creating and encouraging digital communities of reception. Forced Entertainment's livestreams of their *Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare* series, for example, were only available to watch online as they were broadcast. Lavender foregrounds the importance of this in shaping his own experience of watching the production online, writing that he found the piece 'absorbing and interesting, not least because I understood that I was co-temporal with the event as

live performance, and co-terminous with the festival spectators […] in the venue with the performer' (350). Lavender locates value in the shared moment of liveness, summarising that 'the act of remote viewing became the more concentrated precisely because it existed in a distributed present' (350).

Although Lavender does not directly acknowledge that this 'present' is also shared with other online spectators, the temporal concentration of the audience also helped generate online discussions on Twitter about the stream. As I explore elsewhere (Nicholas, 2018: 86), the durational format of the piece, with its focus on the aural rather than visual, gave audiences the flexibility both to plan their viewing using the schedule of performances and to engage in online conversations whilst it was taking place. In her interview, Jenny described how she had managed to watch the livestream of the production despite being in Australia:

> Time zones can be terrible with watching work live streamed from Europe – but I tend to catch quite a bit of Forced Entertainment's work because it's often durational! If I'm remembering correctly, I woke up and saw UK mates were tweeting about it, and so I could watch it in our early morning, and then I tried to keep it up as a habit for the week.
>
> (Jenny, 23 March 2018)

Although she was not in the same time zone as the production, the durational format allowed Jenny to engage with the production, and to structure that engagement into her working week, with the scheduled, repetitious nature of the performances allowing her to make watching a 'habit' for the length of the run. Jenny also described how she appreciated the way that Forced Entertainment's livestreams allowed her to 'talk in real-time with my UK friends about theatre' through live-tweeting, explaining that '[t]he rest of the time I would be responding to reviews alone, or would be seeing performances months/years after their UK runs […] It was

nice to feel connected that way' (Jenny, 23 March 2018). Here, again, the value of live online distribution, and the temporal co-presence it enables, is articulated in terms of its ability to create a concentrated community of reception which connects audience members with each other through online conversation.

However, watching during live transmission is not the only way that audiences connected with each other around online Shakespeare broadcasts. One survey respondent wrote about how she had organised with a friend to watch a broadcast via catch-up at the same time, describing how, when her friend had to pause the production, she had 'rewound and watched some parts again while waiting for her to catch up'. In this case, the ability to make an intervention in the progression of the production by pausing actually allowed these audience members to construct their own sense of liveness through co-temporal engagement with each other. In this experience, value is still placed on the 'liveness' of a co-temporality that enables real-time communication, but here, the 'distributed present' is separated from the moment of transmission – these audiences were able to partly construct their own sense of 'liveness' even when watching recorded material.

Reports of experiences such as this, and others from the survey and interviews, indicate that whilst a significant proportion of audiences did not watch online Shakespeare broadcasts live as they were broadcast, 'liveness', in various forms, tended to be considered as an important element of their experiences. Not watching live, in other words, did not preclude audiences from experiencing liveness online and, in fact, the ability to access broadcasts beyond live transmission opened up opportunities for audiences to engage in a variety of viewing practices in which they negotiated how they watched to construct their own sense of 'liveness'.

Understanding that watching something live as it is broadcast and experiencing 'liveness' can be different things – and that the latter does not necessarily derive from the former – is important for understanding how audiences experience online broadcasts. Whilst the *Live-to-Digital* report explicitly states in its summary that streaming audiences do not consider 'liveness' as important, the wording of the question on which they base this conclusion is actually 'How important is it to you that the streamed performance online or on TV is live (i.e. taking place in real time)?' (Reidy *et al*., 2016: 199), thus conflating actually watching something live with experiencing 'liveness'. Whilst it can be concluded from the answers to this question that watching during live transmission is not important for the majority of audiences, it cannot be said with certainty that those audiences do not value the experience of 'liveness'.

The assumption that 'watching live' correlates with 'liveness' indicates a lack of shared understanding of the term between theatre professionals, academics, and audiences, especially in relation to digital experiences. Although it may be true that many online audiences do not value 'liveness' in any sense, the written responses in my survey point to an apparently paradoxical phenomenon where audiences value liveness as an important part of their online experiences, despite not actually watching during live transmission. The way that digital technologies expand meanings of 'liveness' has been interrogated in discussions around how liveness functions in online spaces more generally. Media sociologist Nick Couldry, for example, has identified two categories of liveness – online and group liveness – resulting from digital interactions. Couldry argues that 'online liveness' differs from 'traditional liveness' in that it relies less on an individual receiving media from a 'socially legitimated point of central transmission' than on the 'social co-presence'

made possible by the internet through features such as chat-rooms (Couldry, 2004: 356-7). Couldry's other category, 'group liveness', is defined as arising from mobile technology that allows 'individuals and groups to be continuously co-present to each other even as they move independently across space' (357).

Although his article pre-dates the launch of much social media, including Twitter, as well as the widespread use of smartphones and tablets that can be used as 'second screens', both categories of liveness can be seen as actively at play in audience experiences of online Shakespeare broadcasts. The social media discussions centred around livestreams could be characterised as a form of 'online liveness', with the way that audiences articulated the value of 'liveness' in terms of its ability to create communities reflecting the emphasis on 'social co-presence' in Couldry's definition. Although Couldry sees 'group liveness' as decentred from a single media object, it can also be seen as featuring in approaches such as live-texting around a production, which relies on instant communication within pre-existing groups. The identification of these categories is useful in that it acknowledges both that liveness is a construct rather than a natural category, and in that it demonstrates how digital methods of communication intervene in understandings and experiences of liveness, potentially creating multiple definitions of the term. However, Couldry's account risks slipping into technological determinism, with both online and group liveness described as arising out of new technologies, rather than out of the ways that audiences put those technologies to use. In this sense, then, these categories alone cannot fully account for how audiences construct and manipulate their own experiences of time and liveness in online broadcasts.

Philip Auslander addresses this tendency towards technological determinism in a 2012 article in which he reconsiders his earlier position on 'digital liveness' set out in the second edition of *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (2008). Auslander had previously concluded that 'experiencing digital technologies as live is a function of the technologies' ability to respond to us in real time' but, finding that this ignored the work of the audience, he puts forward a phenomenological perspective, placing the audience as the central agent in the creation of digital liveness (2012: 3). Emphasising the role of the audience in constructing 'liveness' online, Auslander suggests that

> in order to experience interactive technologies as live, we similarly must be willing to experience and take seriously their claims to liveness and presence: an entity we know to be technological that makes a claim to being live becomes fully present to us when we grasp it as live. In both cases, we must respect the claim made by the object for the effect to take place.
>
> (Auslander, 2012: 8)

If we map this onto online theatre broadcasts, this would mean that whilst a stream can make a 'claim' to being live through its distribution strategy or presentation, it cannot be experienced as such until the audience are willing to 'take seriously' that claim to liveness; they must 'buy in' to the idea that the broadcast is 'live' in order to experience 'digital liveness'. For Auslander this 'buy in' requires focus and attention from the audience; he describes it as 'a willed and fragile act of consciousness […] an act that must be *actively sustained* to maintain the engagement on those terms' (2012: 8, emphasis added).

Although some respondents described deliberately focusing their attention in order to 'buy in' to the claims of digital liveness in online Shakespeare broadcasts, the success of this was rarely described as a result of willpower only. One survey

respondent wrote that she was 'intent upon immersing myself as fully as possible in the experience' but said she was assisted by the 'quality of the feed and the camera work', implying that she worked in collaboration with the aesthetics of the stream to create a sense of immersion and presence. The way that complex interactions between different elements of online spectatorship can interact to create (or replicate) an experience of liveness was further illustrated by Anja in a comment where she elaborated on her statement that the Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* livestream (2016) was the closest she had come to 'a live experience without being in the space with the rest of the audience'. Comparing the Globe to streams from indoor theatres 'where you can't tell where and when it's being performed', she explained that part of the sense of liveness she experienced was specific to the Globe space, writing that 'productions at the Globe are more live anyway, just because of the open air situation, and that came across in the live stream'. Being able to see the physical environment – she points out that it was windy and that she could see it getting progressively darker as the sun set – was a particular factor that contributed to her 'buying in' to the liveness of the production. Picking out a particular moment in the production, she goes on to comment on how the presence of the Globe audience in the visual and aural frame of the livestream made her feel as though her experience was simultaneous with that of the live audience:

> I remember at one point […] one of the boys called one of the girls 'bitch', and I gasped at home in front of my laptop and at the same time heard the audible gasp from the audience at the Globe. That was amazing as an audience experience.
>
> (Anja, 9 March 2018)

As well as being connected to the audience in the theatre, she also mentions that she followed the official hashtag on Twitter during the show and interval, writing that even though she did not know the people tweeting, that 'it almost felt like sharing it with friends, commenting on what was happening, the characters etc.' For Anja, this complex bricolage of elements, some of which were determined by where the production was staged, some by the filming and distribution strategies, and some by her own behaviours and those of other online audiences, all contributed to the sense that she was participating in a live performance.

Anja's account corroborates Auslander's assertion that rather than being technologically determined, the locus of digital liveness ultimately resides in audience experience. However, it complicates the implication that the experience of liveness is necessarily a result of a willed and uninterrupted focus of attention on the part of the audience member. Indeed, Anja's diversion of attention from the livestream to the Twitter feed, an act that could potentially disrupt the 'fragile' creation of digital liveness as Auslander frames it, actually enhances her sense of participation in the live event. Anja's manipulation of different digital elements suggests that online audiences are more sophisticated than Auslander allows for, and that the experience of digital liveness is more malleable and flexible than he implies. A sense of liveness does not necessarily dissolve in online broadcast experiences if audiences do not actively maintain focused attention on the stream or perform a trick of consciousness to convince themselves that what they are participating in is live.[43] Partly, this is because in the experience that Anja describes,

[43] The idea that audiences perform 'mental-tricks' in order to experience liveness has been a common way of explaining the popularity of delayed or encore screenings to cinemas. See M. J. Kidnie (2018) for an interrogation of this position.

multiple technologies and elements are making their own claims to different types of liveness which she recognises and responds to. Anja highlights the specific brand of liveness that arises from the Globe's architecture, and the sense of connection with the audience at the Globe, as well as the sense of co-presence created from the watching along with others during the live transmission of the stream, and the kind of 'online liveness' that Twitter enables. Unlike in Auslander's formulation where one 'virtual entity' makes a claim for liveness which the spectator or user must then consciously grasp as live, in online broadcast experiences multiple digital and non-digital elements – including the theatre, the camerawork and editing, the method of distribution, the online platform, and social media – all create a network of different claims for liveness which the audience member configures for herself at the point of reception.

This network of interacting elements correlates with what media studies scholar Karin van Es has described as the 'constellations of liveness' at work in online environments (van Es, 2017: 5). Seeing Auslander's account as attributing too much agency in the creation of liveness to audiences, but not rejecting their role in the process, van Es suggests that in order to understand its diversity, 'the live needs to be considered as the product of the complex interaction among institutions, technology, and users' (25). Pointing out that social media platforms such as Twitter not only make their own claims to be live, but also 'intersect with traditional forms of liveness', van Es argues that multifarious forms of liveness function across digital media, differences which, she suggests, are masked by Auslander's catch-all term of 'digital liveness' (van Es, 2017: 2, 10). Rather than being either an ontological function of technology, a phenomenon constructed by audiences, or simply a rhetoric for attracting viewers, van Es argues that liveness arises from interactions between

these social and technical elements, resulting in ‘multiple constructions of the live, each of which should be valued for its specificity’ (21).

The idea of ‘constellations of liveness’ is a particularly helpful one in relation to understanding the multiplicity of approaches and experiences that audiences reported in relation to liveness in online Shakespeare broadcasts. Not only does it take account of the different ways each broadcast makes claims for liveness through their distribution strategies and framing, but it also accounts for each audience member’s agency in relation to these claims. The acknowledgement that each audience member makes an intervention in shaping the ‘constellation of liveness’ for each encounter can help explain an experience such as Anja’s, in which liveness was created by drawing on a number of elements including the broadcasting strategy, but can also explain how liveness can be experienced by audiences who watched via catch-up. In these experiences, the catch-up recording itself may make little claim to liveness, but through behaviours such as live-texting, audiences can create their own sense of co-presence and co-temporality.

In online broadcasts then, the broadcaster’s claims to liveness do not, as Auslander asserts, necessarily need to be taken seriously in order for liveness and presence to feature in an audience’s experience. Liveness does not only emerge from simultaneity of transmission and reception, or from an audience’s conscious and willed act to accept an experience as live, but from the interactions between an institution, the distribution strategy, online platforms, and the way an audience member chooses to participate. Because liveness takes many forms in the digital sphere it can be played with and reconfigured. However, audiences do not construct liveness on their own, completely apart from the theatre broadcast. Rather, they construct their experience of time and liveness in conversation with it. Elements once

thought crucial to theatrical liveness, such as temporal simultaneity or physical presence, may be dispensed with, but this does not mean that liveness is not important to audiences. Liveness can also be exaggerated and enhanced by online reception, and for many audience members it is what distinguishes the experience of watching a stream from that of watching downloadable theatre recordings, or DVDs. It is the sense of community and the feeling of being part of something that motivates them to watch and participate.

Managing Time: Catching-up, Pausing, and Partial Viewing

As much as online streams might make claims to liveness, they also make claims to convenience and flexibility and the increased access that this provides. The intervention that a number of survey respondents chose to make in the 'constellation of liveness' was to destabilise it in favour of watching whenever it was convenient for them to do so. Even when liveness was valued by audiences, it was not always indispensable. Describing some of the factors that influenced her decision to watch live or via catch-up, one survey respondent explained:

> It was basically if I remembered/If I was available. The thing that is very helpful about online broadcasts is the ability to pick when you would like to start it. I do enjoy watching live where possible, as I enjoy discussing on twitter with friends when possible, but if I have something on at the same time it's not the end of the world as I can watch later and still get the same experience of the production.
>
> (Audience response to Q11)

Like Anja and the other respondents discussed above, this audience member valued watching live because it enabled her to participate in virtual communities of

reception. But her comment also implies that watching in ‘real-time’ was not vital to her experience of the broadcasts themselves, writing that it was possible to watch later and to ‘get the same experience of the production’.

Discussing the implications of such ‘time-shifted’ consumption in relation to television and the rise of on-demand platforms such as BBC iPlayer, Andrew Crisell proposes that it is possible for audiences to experience catch-up television in a similar way to live television. This is especially true, he argues, if the material is ‘time sensitive’ and is watched ‘as-live’, perhaps one or two days after it is initially broadcast, or within what he describes as a ‘zone of liveness’ or ‘period of contemporariness’ (Crisell, 2012: 96). He proposes that the limited temporal availability of content on streaming platforms such as BBC iPlayer contributes to a sense for the viewer that they are ‘imagining that the programme is being transmitted in the here and now’ rather than just ‘catching-up’ with missed content (96-7). The idea that online streaming constitutes a ‘re-broadcasting that has been initiated by the viewer or listener’ (Crisell, 2012: 98) goes some way to illuminating how the respondent quoted above felt that it is possible to have the same experience of a production whether it is watched live or later on.

However, the temporal flexibility of the streams themselves, with the ability to pause and track backwards and forwards, complicates the idea that audiences are necessarily ‘re-imagining’ the broadcast event when they watch via catch-up. Respondents to my survey reported taking advantage of the temporal flexibility of online spectatorship, with 39% of respondents saying that they had stopped and started a broadcast as they watched, and 19% stating that they had rewound or fast-forwarded through a production. This kind of viewing displaces the temporality and patterns of attention of ‘theatrical’ spectatorship generally expected at contemporary

live performances in which the only pauses, interruptions or ruptures are regulated intervals, mistakes, or unforeseen emergencies. Although there are exceptions – in immersive or participatory performances, for example – most contemporary Shakespeare productions aim to hold the continuous and concentrated attention of their audiences. Indeed, theatres aim to alter audience members' experiences of time through managing their attention, with the way audiences experience time used as a measure of success. In an online survey emailed to attendees of the RSC's *Antony and Cleopatra* Live from Stratford-Upon-Avon cinema broadcast (2017), audiences were asked to mark a point between 'It felt like time was passing slowly' and 'I hardly noticed the time passing' to represent how they felt during the broadcast. From the answers to this question the RSC hoped, presumably, to get an idea of how focused, immersed and engaged audiences were in cinemas and therefore whether or not the broadcast was successful in its aim of translating theatrical spectatorship to cinemas. The question demonstrates how uninterrupted focus, immersion and a sense of time passing are venerated in theatrical, and cinematic, spectatorship as markers of quality.

If undivided focus and attention are ways of judging high-quality, valuable theatrical experiences, then online reception appears not to make the mark. Online audiences can pause productions whenever they want or need to, and can jump around or re-watch sections, allowing for multiple interruptions that can reorder a production's intended temporalities. The removal of a specific and communal site of reception also means that audiences feel able to perform other tasks whilst they watch, including engaging with social media, eating, and moving around. However, whilst it is certainly true that survey respondents often engaged in viewing practices that could be described as distracted, it is not necessarily true that doing so equated

with disengaged or less valuable experiences. For example, participating in 'distracted' practices, such as tweeting (which I discuss in detail below), often enhanced an audience member's experience of a broadcast, enabling them to engage with the production on multiple levels.

That 'distracted' experiences could be valuable ones reflects the different ways in which attention is valued in the theatre and online. Both media are invested in attracting and capitalising on the attention of audiences. In the case of theatre, audiences (usually) buy a ticket in return for the promise of an experience that captures their attention for a specific amount of time. A production is usually designed to be experienced as a complete piece (or number of pieces if it is in parts) and the financial buy-in from audiences, as well as the social awkwardness of leaving a theatre whilst a production is in full swing, makes it unusual for audience members to watch only part of a live production. Audience attention works differently as an object of exchange online, with advertisers paying for opportunities to capture attention, and audiences paying (for example, through subscription services such as Netflix) for the opportunity to keep their attention focused and free from advert breaks. As James G. Webster explains in describing the digital 'marketplace of attention', '[m]uch activity on the Internet, by those interested in profits and other goods, is designed to produce greater attention, even if only for a moment' (Webster, 2014: 6). The way that much smaller units of attention are valued online is demonstrated by the measurement of video content popularity through view counts. The definition of what constitutes a view varies from platform to platform, but is rarely a measure of a video having been watched in its entirety. It is generally thought that YouTube counts a view as someone watching for 30 seconds or longer, while

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram value even shorter periods of engagement, counting an interaction of 3 seconds or longer as a video view (Lua, 2017).

By broadcasting online, and becoming 'public goods' that can be 'endlessly reproduced and consumed without diminishing supply' (Webster, 2014: 16), the Shakespeare productions listed in the survey participate in this online attention economy, allowing audiences to approach and consume online broadcasts as they might any other online media content. MTM's *Live-to-Digital in the Arts* report found that 'passive consumption' of live-to-digital work was common, with 'people encountering performances or events through friends' posts on Facebook or algorithmic recommendations on YouTube' (MTM, 2018: 7). The report also found that engagement with shorter-form content was more common than with longer-form content: 22% of their survey respondents 'engage with content less than 5 minutes in length on a weekly basis, whereas 15% engage with content of between one and four hours in length on a monthly basis' (2018: 7). 11% of my own survey respondents said that they had watched only part of a production online, reinforcing the idea that some online audiences for theatre and the arts are engaging for shorter periods of time, allowing them to 'try out' a performance by watching part of it.

The ability of online streams to shift, delay, or extend the theatrical experience had an impact not only on how audiences experienced individual broadcasts but also on how they planned and organised their time to watch. In the quote at the beginning of this section, the respondent references her own schedule and availability – 'If I was available […] if I have something on at the same time' – as factors in deciding how to watch, describing a casual attitude to viewing online broadcasts dependent on other commitments. This is a markedly different approach to the level of preparation and planning associated with live theatre or cinema broadcast

attendance, in which tickets and travel must usually be booked, often well ahead of time. Rather than being a central event around which other events and plans are organised, here, watching online theatre is to be fit around other existing commitments. As two other respondents explained, preparing to watch an online broadcast was 'no different to getting ready to watch a tv programme or film' which was 'fit into […] normal activity rather than being a separate event'. For these audience members, online streaming transformed something that, in its live form, is fixed in time and space, into a flexible media product that, much like other content available via on-demand streaming platforms, could be 'fit into' their daily lives.

However, not everyone's approach to watching online broadcasts was so casual. In fact, respondents to the survey were polarised by whether they organised their time around the broadcast, or whether they organised watching the broadcast around their already-occupied time. In direct contrast to the respondent who approached broadcasts no differently to watching television, another audience member wrote, 'I organised my evening around it, rather as I would going to any theatrical event, and made sure I'd brewed my tea before it started'. Although the actual preparation differs (it is unlikely that brewing tea is part of this respondent's usual theatre-going ritual) this audience member describes carving out time to watch the production and prepares in a way that attempts to replicate what might be considered a 'theatrical' mode of spectatorship. To varying extents other respondents also describe managing any potential distractions and organising their time around their plans to view. One explains how she 'blocked the time of the broadcast so that nothing except an emergency would interrupt my viewing', and another describes how preparing for the broadcast also involved '[t]elling my partner

that I would be watching at 8pm and negotiating which room was convenient to use [and] telling them when it was finished'.

These respondents demonstrate a desire to recreate theatrical ways of managing time and attention in their online experiences. Indeed, many of the survey respondents reported replicating quasi-theatrical models of attention when watching a broadcast, with 56% saying that they had watched a whole production all the way through without altering anything, including the intervals. Even when audiences did alter the linear temporality of the production, they tended to maintain a commitment to the value of experiencing a production in its entirety: 39% of respondents watched while stopping and starting and 19% watched while stopping, starting, and tracking through the production, but in both cases whole productions were eventually watched, even if stretched across time. These audience members managed their own time, specifically mapping theatrical ways of valuing attention onto their online experiences, suggesting that focus and immersion are important elements of online broadcast experiences for audiences despite the more fragmented modes of spectatorship available to them through online distribution.

That there are different ways of managing time in these experiences raises questions about the value of different modes of participation, and particularly what 'counts' as a theatrical encounter. In his interview, Michael specifically reported having watched 'a few minutes of Forced Entertainment's Complete Works, and a bit of 1623 Theatre Company's King Lear'. The fact that he felt compelled to state that he had only watched part of these productions, distinguishing them from those he had seen in full, suggests that he did not feel entitled to discuss them fully or claim the cultural and social capital that might have come with seeing complete productions. However, the fact that Michael mentioned these productions at all

indicates that he did value these experiences in some way. Whilst explicitly not laying claim to a 'full experience' of the streams, he *does* lay claim to having known about the productions and their online streams – something that as discussed at the outset of this chapter, often requires active participation in particular social and cultural networks. It is also possible that having seen even part of a production will allow Michael to participate to some degree in a conversation about the work. Even a momentary encounter with *Complete Works*, for example, would give an idea about the tone, concept and aesthetic of the piece in similar way that seeing a production photograph or trailer might. Moreover, because it was a durational and serial work, Michael would not be in a minority having not seen the 'complete' production.

If part of the value of a theatrical encounter is what an audience member can do with that experience afterwards, then a partial online encounter could be deemed meaningful and valuable, even if an audience member might rank it as less valuable than seeing a full production. However, what 'counts' as a meaningful engagement with online theatre also depends on who is asking the question, and what they are trying to achieve. For platforms trying to sell advertising space, three seconds is valuable. For theatre companies trying to increase access to, or promote productions, partial encounters may be just as valuable as full ones. For productions trying to promote a social message, partial encounters may be less valuable, and for those whose main motivation is creating an archive, the length of time that audiences engage now may be less relevant than the potential future encounters with the piece.

Understanding that audiences engage with online broadcasts in different ways is important then for theatre companies trying to achieve something specific by broadcasting online. View counts are often quoted as a way of signalling the success

of Shakespeare broadcasts often without recognising or acknowledging that many kinds of audience attention – from focused and immersed to fleeting or even accidental – are included in this number. Whilst these results broadly demonstrate two ways of engaging – replicating theatrical models of attention, or utilising online modes of participation – different distribution models and platforms can court different types of attention. As one survey respondent explained, her approach to watching online broadcasts was dependent both on her own availability and that of the stream:

> I made plans around watching it, to make sure I wouldn't be too busy and had food on hand, that sort of thing. For streams during the workday, I worked ahead as much as possible the previous day so I'd be able to comfortably multitask with the show on.
>
> (Audience response to Q16)

This respondent demonstrates a dedication to watching 'theatrically' by minimising distractions but shows a willingness to engage in more distracted modes of engagement by multitasking if it is the only option available, even if that means watching whilst at work.

The way that audiences organise and manage their time during online broadcast spectatorship reflects how they value theatre and Shakespeare spectatorship. These results show however, that 'distracted' or temporally fragmented modes of participation do not necessarily mean that audiences value their encounters less than audiences who consciously replicate theatrical conditions of reception. As the comment above demonstrates, a willingness to multitask can be indicative of a strong commitment to engaging with the production. 'Distracted' modes of spectatorship can allow audiences to fit productions into their day, whilst

partial or passive consumption allows audiences to discover and try out different kinds of theatre. As I explore in the next section, they can also enable audiences to negotiate new forms of theatrical co-presence and communication. Indeed, the fact that audiences are often able to find value in fragmented, disrupted or partial experiences with theatre online raises questions about the importance of physical and temporal co-presence in the theatrical encounter. Many online audiences are keen to recreate a 'theatrical' experience, and are able to do so without being in the theatre or watching during live, or even continuous transmission. The way that audiences attend to online Shakespeare broadcasts challenges ideas around what might 'count' as a meaningful theatrical encounter, a question that I explore in more detail below.

Negotiating Space: Co-presence and Community

The way that online broadcasts challenge what 'counts' as a theatrical encounter extends beyond the temporal aspects of spectatorship and into other elements of the viewing experience. Audiences are not only temporally dislocated, but are also spatially dispersed. The fact that audience members are geographically separated not only from the theatre auditorium but from a defined space of communal reception, in which they are physically co-present with other audience members, distinguishes online reception of theatre from the reception of theatre broadcasts in screening venues or schools. 62% of survey respondents reported watching all of their online Shakespeare broadcasts alone, suggesting that watching theatre online is primarily a private, solitary activity that fails to replicate the kinds of co-presence and communities of reception deemed as central to the theatrical experience.

In responding to the question of who they had watched online broadcasts with, however, two survey respondents left comments that queried the necessity of being physically present with someone in order to be 'watching with' them. One wrote that she had 'watched the production alone, but was communicating on social media with others who were also watching it', and the other stated that during the Globe's broadcast of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016) she had 'live-texted with my best friend who was watching 700 miles away'. The latter ended her comment by asking 'does this count?', signalling an uncertainty around how digital technologies have changed what it means to be co-present with others. These comments indicate that these audience members felt as though they had watched alongside other people despite not sharing the physical space of reception with anyone else. Digital communication methods such as social media and live texting allowed these audience members to feel connected enough with others whilst watching that they felt that they had not watched alone. As discussed above in relation to the way that audiences valued watching during live transmission for its ability to generate virtual communities of reception, a sense of co-presence remains an important factor for audiences in online broadcast experiences, with audiences drawing on new forms of digital co-presence to negotiate geographical separation.

As well as enabling new forms of co-presence, geographical or spatial separation from other audience members has wider implications for the ways that audiences attend to and experience online broadcasts. As well as organising and controlling the time(s) at which they watch, audiences also have control over where and how they watch online broadcasts. Without the behavioural expectations associated with being part of a physical audience, online audiences can move through space, eat and drink whatever they like, and use social media. The spaces

in which audiences encounter online streams also have implications for how audiences choose to focus and attend to broadcasts; spaces are likely to be shared with other media and family members, who may distract or interrupt the audience member's experience.

In this section I explore how being dislocated from a defined, communal space of reception shaped participant's viewing practices. I begin by discussing how the spaces in which audiences watched – primarily domestic home environments – shaped *how* audiences watched. In particular I argue that online broadcast reception is shaped by an interplay between public and private spaces. Related to this, I then explore how being physically separate from other audience members altered audiences' sense of presence and co-presence, examining how theories of presence in the theatre are altered and challenged by online experiences with theatre. As the comments above demonstrate, digital communication is a key factor in online broadcast experiences. In the final section, I look specifically at how audiences used social media to create a sense of co-presence and community. I argue that in negotiating what is usually taken to be a vital aspect of the theatrical experience – physical co-presence with audiences and performers – the practices of the online audience challenges and reshapes ideas about what it means to be an audience of Shakespeare in performance.

'A public event consumed privately': Spaces of Online Reception

In distributing to geographically disparate audience members, online broadcasts create fragmented, multiple, and mobile spaces of theatrical reception, that look less and less like the theatre auditoriums and spaces in which the filmed performances

are taking place. Survey respondents reported accessing online broadcasts in a variety of ways. 28% of respondents watched online broadcasts on or through an internet-enabled or connected television screen, anchoring themselves to a fixed place of (potentially communal) reception within the home and creating a larger, and perhaps better quality, screen experience. The majority of audience members, however, watched on screens that perform multiple uses. The most common way of accessing online broadcasts was via laptop computer, a screen that is used both in and out of the house and is commonly used for work, keeping in touch with friends, and for consuming media in multiple forms. As well as the 68% of respondents who reported watching an online Shakespeare broadcast on a laptop, a further 21% said they watched on a tablet, and 4% that they watched on a mobile phone. The popularity of physically mobile devices as a way of watching broadcasts suggests that whilst online reception can resemble older modes of domestic media consumption such as television, the mobility of both audiences and screens through space is a significant feature of theatrical reception online.

Instead of public spaces of communal reception, audiences tend to watch online theatre in the privacy of their own homes and on personal devices. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter the use of individual devices to access Shakespeare in performance is related to shifts in how audiences are accessing television online via streaming services such as Netflix. Discussing the digital delivery of TV and film, media scholar Chuck Tryon argues that different kinds of media mobility, which allow audiences to stream media through and across different digital devices, have led us to ‘renegotiate the physical space of our lived environment, upsetting the primacy of the central television set in the family room’ (2012: 290). Tryon points out that media mobility has become associated with ‘active

and engaged, but often solitary, viewing', arguing that the ability to watch wherever and however we want 'promotes a more fragmented, individualized notion of spectatorship' (288-9). The connection between media mobility and individualised spectatorship is apparent in how audiences watched online Shakespeare broadcasts. As well as the 62% of survey respondents who watched all of their broadcasts alone, just 25% of respondents watched some with other people, and only 13% always watched with someone else. Of those who had watched in the company of others, 62% watched with the people that they lived with, with communal gatherings of family or friends less common (34%) and larger organised screenings even less so (10%). The way that digital delivery and mobile consumption can promote individualised modes of viewing broadcasts, not only in relation to the wider audience, but within the home itself, is exemplified by the survey respondent who prepared for watching a broadcast by '[t]elling my partner that I would be watching at 8pm and negotiating which room was convenient to use [and] telling them when it was finished'. This audience member participated in the renegotiation of physical space that Tryon mentions, something presumably only possible because of the mobility of the media devices and platforms available to them, in order to create a focused space of, markedly individual, reception.

On the surface, the survey responses seem to corroborate the theory that online media experiences are, on the whole, individual and isolated, and prioritise private consumption over participation in a public, communal event. Elsewhere, however, the responses suggest that a more complex notion of the relationship between public and private is played out in online broadcast experiences. One respondent commented that watching the broadcast online

> felt personal and curiously intimate, whilst also public and casual: the independence of reading a book but with the sense of immanence of live performance. Free of expectations b/c it was a public event consumed privately.
>
> (Audience response to Q17)

Rather than being a straightforwardly private experience, this audience member identifies a sense that watching the broadcast was simultaneously a private and public experience. Whilst the broadcast was privately consumed, and could therefore be consumed 'free of expectations', as an event available to many audience members the 'public' nature of the broadcast still held weight for this audience member. She valued the 'independence' of watching privately, controlling when and how she watched as she would approach reading a book, whilst also valuing the sense of engaging in a wider, public event.

The tension between public media and private consumption is explored by Barbara Klinger in her examination of cinema reception within the home. She writes that '[i]n assuming a key role as an economic and cultural locus of movie watching, the home becomes a site of negotiation and tension between the public and the private' (Klinger, 2006: 8-9). As a site of reception, Klinger writes, the home is 'a conundrum – an apparent retreat from public space that is dependent on technologies of visual and audio reproduction not only for its mise-en-scène and sound track but also for its very sense of privacy' (10). Similarly, when theatre is watched in the home, or by extension, on a personal device, negotiating between the public and the private is a key factor of the experience. The audience member seemingly 'retreats' from the public space of the theatre auditorium, but depends on both the event happening in the public space of the theatre and the broadcast being an online public event, in order to experience a heightened sense of participation

that distinguishes an online broadcast from a film or TV adaptation or a DVD recording.

This interplay between the private and the public troubles the assumption that because online broadcasts are experienced away from the space of the theatre, and away from other audience members, they necessarily constitute a second- or even third-best experience of Shakespeare in performance for audiences. Although some respondents expressed a desire to be in the audience physically rather than watching on screen, there was also evidence that experiencing a public performance in private was a source of pleasure for others. Respondents articulated feeling liberated from the constraints and codes of behaviour that come with being physically present in a theatre auditorium. This sense of relative freedom is reflected in the fact that 80% of respondents reported eating or drinking as they watched and 45% reporting that they moved around during the production – behaviours that are usually seen as disruptive in the theatre and therefore tend to be discouraged. Explaining how being in a private space altered her behaviour, one respondent wrote that:

> I wouldn't tweet about a production while watching it live, I'd only do that afterwards, but now I felt I wasn't disturbing anyone else by my online activities. I usually don't eat or drink in the theatre, but again I felt like I wasn't disturbing anyone else doing it on my own. Watching from home meant I could do it in my pyjamas, and life is always better when you're in your pyjamas.
>
> (Audience comment to Q16)

For this audience member being spatially separate from other audience members allowed her to participate in a more relaxed way by tweeting, eating and drinking, and wearing whatever she liked. Beyond the simple pleasures of home media consumption however, there is a sense of transgression in the comment which adds

to the audience member's enjoyment. It is not only the fact that she is watching something at home in her pyjamas but specifically that she is watching *theatre* at home in her pyjamas, breaking the traditional rules and conventions of theatrical spectatorship in the process.

Counter to the idea that the geographical separation of online audiences from the physical theatre production is inherently negative, online broadcasts can allow audiences to participate in ways that would be deemed unacceptable the public space of the theatre, deriving pleasure from the transgression between public and private space. Moreover, whilst the 'fragmented, individualized notion of spectatorship' that Tryon argues is a result of media mobility might appear to be the antithesis of theatrical spectatorship, being physically separate from each other can, paradoxically, promote engagement and communication between audience members in online experiences. As Tryon concedes in relation to film viewing, 'new devices can, in some cases, become embedded in a socially networked and engaged film culture, one in which users share, blog, tweet and even remix films' (2012: 300). Similarly, the spectatorship of theatre in homes and on personal devices, free from the constraints of the theatre or cinema, allows audiences to share, communicate and engage with each other whilst they watch both virtually, through social media and blogs, and in person. In the following two sections I focus on how such activities allowed audience members to negotiate being physically separate from each other by creating ways of being co-present that do not rely on physical proximity.

'I don't tend to feel connected […] unless I'm in the middle of it': Presence and Co-presence

When asked if they had felt connected to other audience members whilst watching online broadcasts, survey respondents tended to respond negatively, with 12% strongly disagreeing and 33% disagreeing that they had felt a sense of connection with other audience members. Comments from respondents explaining that they 'didn't feel connected to the performance', 'felt separated from the audience', or that they 'don't tend to feel connected to an audience unless [they are] in the middle of it' lend weight to theories arguing that the physical co-presence of audience members and actors in the same space is an integral and defining requirement of a theatrical experience. However, whilst a significant number of survey respondents felt that a sense of connection to other audience members was missing in their online broadcast experiences, the idea that broadcasts completely sever a sense of co-presence or community is troubled by other responses. 14% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they *had* felt connected to others, and a further 41% (the largest proportion) selected that they neither agreed or disagreed, suggesting that they were not sure, or could not remember, if they had experienced a sense of connection whilst watching. The high level of uncertainty around this question reflects the ambivalence around connection from cinema audiences, and perhaps indicates that audiences were not exactly sure what 'feeling connected' to each other meant or felt like in this new, online way of encountering theatre.

The fact that some audience members did feel connected despite not being physically co-present reflects how what 'being together' means might be shifting as a result of digital communication technologies. The way that space, distance, and presence are experienced has been altered and expanded by new communication

technologies such as instant messaging and social media. Shared physical space, therefore, is no longer a pre-requisite for experiencing co-presence in day-to-day life.[44] Similarly, online reception stretches the meaning of shared time and place. Audiences can watch at the same time, in different places, but connect together via the same online 'space' of a social media site, or convene in these online spaces having watched at different times. The potential for 'co-presence' is therefore not confined to the duration of the filmed or live production itself, but potentially for the entire period that the broadcast recording is publicly available, and even beyond that.

Two theories of theatrical presence that go beyond shared physical space are helpful in framing audiences' approaches to and experiences of presence and co-presence. In his exploration of how presence has been theorised in the theatre, Cormac Power suggests that rather than presence being an a priori attribute of theatre, that theatre 'is a place where different levels of presence are manipulated and played with' (2008: 175). Turning the idea that theatre is a place where audiences go to experience (co)presence in its 'pure' form on its head, Power argues that, instead, theatre can interrogate what it might mean to actually experience presence in different ways. Amy Petersen Jensen also raises questions about theatrical presence in her examination of the impact of media culture on the production and reception of theatre in the last part of the twentieth century. She proposes that acknowledging how the encounter between spectator and performer is always mediated in some way 'opens the door to a definition of theatrical presence that does not require a physical interaction […] but instead focuses on presence as a

[44] This is explored in Nick Couldry's discussion of how digital communication technologies create new forms of 'group liveness' (2004: 357), where individuals feel constantly connected to each other despite being physically separate.

perception of the collective community, a constructed aura that is agreed upon by a mass public' (2007: 18). Both Power's suggestion that the theatre is a site for playing with presence and Petersen Jensen's argument that, in a mediatised culture, presence is defined not by proximity but by 'a communal negotiation of what is culturally acceptable' (111), create space for a productive discussion about how online audiences, geographically separated from production and each other, might experience and value presence and co-presence.

If presence is to be defined not by spatial proximity but by 'communal negotiation', then the high level of uncertainty from respondents about whether or not they felt connected to other audience members demonstrates that the negotiation about what constitutes 'presence' in online theatre broadcast experiences is very much an ongoing one. A singular understanding of what 'presence' might look or feel like in online broadcasts is complicated by the way the broadcasts simultaneously foreground older modes of presence as valuable alongside new modes of accessing and engaging with theatre digitally. At the same time as they enable and encourage digital and remote modes of accessing and engaging with theatre, online broadcasts specifically value theatrical space and physical modes of presence through their marketing and presentation. As the work on the cinematography of cinema broadcasts has shown, a great deal of time and craft goes into ensuring that theatrical space is translated effectively for screen audiences.[45] Often, this also includes showing audiences in the theatre auditorium, with shots of audience members included before the production and during the interval, or, in the case of

[45] Work that deals with the cinematography of the broadcasts includes Wardle (2014), Wyver (2014a), Wyver (2015), Stone (2016), Friedman (2016) and Sullivan (2017). I discuss this body of work above in Chapter 1.

productions shot in the round or on thrust stages (such as the Globe's or RSC's), during the main body of the production. Physical presence is therefore displayed on screen, and is performed by audiences in the theatre auditorium.[46]

Comments such as Anja's, in which she explains how hearing the gasp of the Globe audience alongside her own reaction made her feel connected to the audience at the theatre, show how the display of physical presence can act as a way of generating a sense of presence for online audiences. The impact of being able to see and hear the audience in the venue was also articulated by Michael. Describing his favourite online Shakespeare broadcasts, he wrote that he thought Cheek by Jowl's *The Winter's Tale* (2017) was 'objectively the best production on all levels' but that he had enjoyed Talawa's *King Lear* (2016) and Black Theatre Live's *Hamlet* (2016) the most. Whilst he described Cheek by Jowl's production as 'straightforwardly stark and powerful', he wrote of Black Theatre Live's *Hamlet* that 'it was great because it was broadcast from quite an intimate venue […] you could see the audience, and it looked really hot and sweaty'. These differences had implications for Michael's sense of presence in relation to the productions. Explaining further, he wrote that:

> when I was watching the Black Theatre Hamlet, I did think 'This is great, and I would like to be there in that room, but this is the next best thing'. Whereas the Cheek by Jowl Winter's Tale was more like a magnificent theatrical machine that was better studied from a distance. I didn't actually wish I was there.
>
> (Michael, 22 March 2018)

[46] See Raby (2018) for an account of how the audience in the theatre at the filmed performance are required to perform.

For Michael, the intimacy of the Black Theatre Live production, and seeing the physical audience experience that intimacy, was both a source of enjoyment and frustration, making him yearn for physical presence. However, in relation to Cheek by Jowl's production, he articulates a preference for a more distant mode of theatrical engagement. There is no desire to be physically present in the theatre, with Michael even going so far as to suggest that the distance provided by the broadcast was actually a preferential way of experiencing that particular production.

Michael's examples demonstrate how experiences of presence and co-presence in online broadcast experiences can be dependent on the type of production, the venue in which it is filmed and the way that it is shot. In Michael's experience of *Hamlet*, the presence of the audience in the frame, and the screening of physical intimacy made Michael want to be in the room with the actors, relegating his online experience to the 'next best thing'. He recognised as he was watching, perhaps based on previous experiences in the theatre, that there would be something more to gain from being physically present in the audience. In his experience of *The Winter's Tale,* a production that was shot on a proscenium stage with the audience rarely visible, Michael identifies that there would be no extra benefit from being in the theatre; the experience is judged as primarily aesthetic and, in his opinion, the spatial and temporal distance provided by a broadcast allowed for a better appreciation of the production.[47]

Michael's differentiation of *Hamlet* as 'the most enjoyable' and *The Winter's Tale* as 'objectively the best' online Shakespeare broadcasts he saw, shows how issues of presence and issues of value are tightly bound together in online broadcast

[47] The impact of different stages on the development of theatre broadcasting is discussed by Greenhalgh (2018).

experiences. Even though he missed being physically present when watching *Hamlet*, the intimacy portrayed by the cameras still resulted in a deeply enjoyable experience for Michael, meaning that he could participate and share in the 'presence' of the production despite watching at home. Presence and co-presence play little part in his evaluation of *The Winter's Tale*, but he judges the experience as valuable despite, and perhaps even because of, the distance created by the broadcast. His contrasting evaluations challenge the idea that a replication of a sense of 'being there' is necessarily what audiences are looking for from their online broadcast experiences of Shakespeare. Online broadcasts create experiences in which different kinds of presence and absence interact, compete, and are variously valued. Geographical distance is not always seen as something to be overcome, but can be embraced, allowing for alternative modes of engaging with and valuing the work. These modes often have learning, education, or appreciation as an additional motivator; for Michael, aesthetic appreciation was key, and elsewhere, Anja describes how hearing the plays performed in English (an experience not readily available in Finland) is an important aspect of her interactions with online broadcasts. Here, theatrical presence is relegated, coming second to other reasons for watching broadcasts online, for which being physically absent may actually be conducive.

Rather than cancelling out or invalidating theatrical presence, online broadcasts constitute an extension and continuation of the way that theatre, as Power suggests, 'is a place where different levels of presence are manipulated and played with' (175). New forms of digital presence question the importance placed on physical proximity but, unlike theatrical experiments that take place entirely online,

online broadcasts also maintain a connection with physical presence.[48] In doing so, institutions broadcasting their Shakespearean work online assert the value of experiencing theatre at the point of reception, whilst also providing digital experiences that value other modes of presence which rely on engagement, communication and participation in a way that is symptomatic of the kind of 'double maneveurs' Rumbold sees at work in the digital projects of Shakespeare institutions (Rumbold, 2010: 315). However, as Michael's responses show, the degree to which online audiences accept or reject the value placed on physical proximity depends on the production, as well as on an audience member's preferred mode of engaging with Shakespeare. Online broadcasts also open up Shakespeare in performance to non-theatrical ways of using and approaching Shakespeare that tend not to value physical presence such as textual analysis.

Not feeling connected to other audience members did not necessarily preclude online audiences from enjoying and valuing their experiences. 52% of respondents agreed and 27% strongly agreed that they felt an emotional response to the performance, and 92% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had enjoyed the experience of watching an online broadcast, implying that enjoyment was not necessarily contingent on a sense of co-presence. As I allude to above, social media and instant messaging platforms are instrumental in challenging concepts of presence, and those audience members who did feel connected to others often mentioned the impact of social media on their experiences. As one respondent commented, '[p]articipating in online conversation meant I absolutely felt

[48] Such experiments include RSC and Mudlark's *Such Tweet Sorrow* (2010), a Twitter adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet,* and Blast Theory's *Karen* (2015), an app-based theatre project played out on smartphones.

like I was connected to other audience members', adding in parentheses, 'in a very different way to watching in the theatre'. The distinction between ways of feeling connected online and in the theatre is significant here. As this respondent points out, it was the online 'conversation' that enabled a sense of connection, signifying the shift from valuing modes of co-presence based on being physically present with each other, to valuing 'active' modes of engaging as they manifest online, such as 'conversation' and 'communication', a shift that broadly correlates with Rumbold's identification of the move from valuing 'access' to 'participation'.

If there is a lack of communal consensus about what presence or co-presence means in online broadcasts, it may be because increasingly such terms are conflated with others such as community, conversation, participation and engagement. In online broadcasts this move to digital models of value results in a shift in focus from the relationship between the performer and the audience to the relationships between individual audience members. Although it is theoretically and technologically possible for online audiences to influence the progression of a live online broadcast, theatre companies have, on the whole, chosen not to take advantage of this.[49] Any communication that takes place online therefore tends to occur between audience members, although, as I discuss below, theatre companies are usually part of these conversations in interesting ways. In what follows I discuss how audiences' experiences with online Shakespeare broadcasts were framed by, and laced with, social interactions, particularly via social media, and explore the kinds of communities of reception and co-presence that these interactions produced.

[49] Platforms such as Facebook Live offer a live comment feature, which allow comments to be seen and responded to by broadcasters, but so far this has not been utilised by theatre companies broadcasting via the platform.

'That connectivity really is a gift': Social Media and Community

Contrary to Tryon's suggestion that flexible media watching causes a 'fragmented, individualized notion of spectatorship', audiences watching online Shakespeare broadcasts engaged in a range of digital and non-digital forms of communication (2012: 288-9). Although they were watching online, and despite the fact that they often watched whilst physically alone, speaking to others in person remained an important part of respondents' experiences, especially before and after watching. 47% of respondents indicated that they had spoken to others in person about watching the production before they watched, and 62% that they had talked in person about the production after they had seen it. These non-digital modes of communication were the most common pre- and post-broadcast activity for respondents, replicating the kinds of pre- and post-show talk common to theatre attendance.[50] However, an easy equation between face-to-face communication and an older 'theatrical' mode of consumption is troubled by the fact that it is also an important and established part of screen media consumption. Sidneyeve Matrix argues in relation to the 'Netflix effect' and binge watching, that video-on-demand is 'not about social exile but enabling and enhancing participation in social conversation and cliques' (2014: 127). She argues that, because viewers are able to watch outside of a broadcast schedule, video on demand 'enables viewers to participate in cultural conversations, online and offline, […] conversational exchanges they might have missed out on otherwise' (120). By enabling audiences to watch theatre beyond the temporal and geographical restrictions of the theatrical

[50] For a discussion of the impact of both organised and informal pre- and post-show conversation on audiences see Heim (2016), especially pp. 93-97 and pp. 114-123.

event, online broadcasts potentially enable more people to participate and engage in the conversation around a particular production, both in person and online.

In this, they extend the community of reception that surrounds a theatrical production, a community which may already extend beyond the group of people physically present at the moment of performance. Audiences of different iterations of the same production may, for example, tweet about their experiences together or discuss the production in person, able to connect and engage on common ground, even though they watched on different nights, or potentially on different continents. Even if audience members do not communicate directly with these other audience members, unless the production is a one-off, the knowledge that there are people outside of the auditorium who have had, or will have, similar experiences creates a sense of a wider community of reception.

As in venue and school broadcasts, the online community of reception is 'imagined' but the affordances of online broadcasts means that this community can be imagined in slightly different ways. Physical separation from other audience members means that, unlike their counterparts in theatres, cinemas and, to a lesser extent as described in Chapter 2, in schools, online audiences are able to communicate *whilst* they are watching rather than just before and after a show and during any intervals. 36% of survey respondents said that they had tweeted their reactions whilst watching an online Shakespeare production and 32% that they had spoken to the people they were watching with as the production progressed. The chart below (Fig. 20), derived from answers to Q14 of the survey, shows how respondents communicated with each other whilst they were watching a production.

The range of activities might seem to reinforce the idea that 'distracted viewing practices' are 'characteristic of online audiences' (Aebischer and Greenhalgh, 2018: 10). Indeed, the issue of distraction did influence the approach that some respondents took to using social media. One respondent commented in relation to using social media that

> I think I usually leave it until the interval or the end to tweet. I do like to see what is being said on Twitter, but I try to give the production my full attention. If I start tweeting it's probably a sign that I'm not all that engaged with the production.
>
> (Audience response to Q14)

For this audience member, social media provides value, but following the Twitter conversation comes at the cost of losing focus on the production itself. For another respondent, however, the benefits of using social media are worth a loss of focus. She writes:

> I would likely turn my smartphone off if I was watching a production with someone physically next to me, but more often than not I'm as excited about the social media discussion of the production/live tweeting element of the play as I am the actual play. That's not to say I wouldn't watch the play if that wasn't part of it, but the social aspect does definitely enhance my enjoyment. For some friends who live abroad, this is the only way that I get to 'see' performances with them at the same time, so that connectivity really is a gift.
>
> (Audience response to Q14)

Beyond being a distraction, the ability to use social media *whilst* watching enables this audience member to actively participate in interactions that enhance her enjoyment of the play. In bridging geographical distance through social media, she is able to participate in a 'real' community of reception, one that goes beyond perceiving or imagining herself to be part of a wider community of spectators.

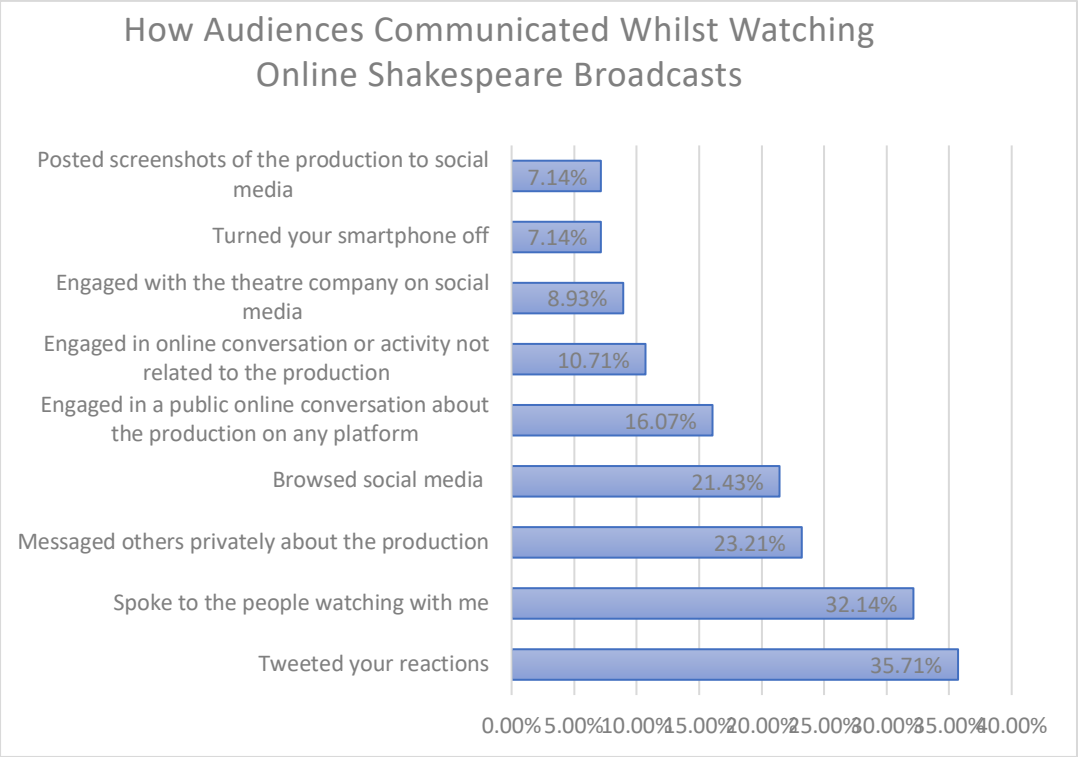

Figure 20: How online audiences communicated whilst watching. Data derived from Q14. Respondents were asked to select all that applied. There was a total of 56 responses to this question.

The idea that being able to communicate *during* the theatrical encounter might result in more engaged and participatory communities of reception is reinforced by Erin Sullivan's comparative analysis of tweets sent before, during, and after the Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company's (KBTC) cinema broadcast of *Romeo and Juliet* (2016) and the online broadcast of the Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016). Sullivan identifies that the majority of tweets sent about the cinema broadcast occurred before, after, or during the interval of the broadcast, resulting in 'miniature, after-the-fact reviews' rather than 'in-the-moment comments' leading to further discussion (2018: 68). Using a chain network analysis, which charts the interactions between tweeters, she demonstrates that, in comparison, the tweets about *Dream*, which also occurred *throughout* the broadcast, were 'far denser and more interconnected than those for *Romeo and Juliet*', and that they 'involved much

more interaction among individual profiles, with audience members responding directly to one another in addition to engaging with big institutional accounts' (70). As Sullivan points out, this ability to engage directly with others is a source of value for some audience members of online broadcasts, allowing them to 'engage collaboratively in the process of meaning-making around the production and, in doing so, to animate their communal experience' (71). This positive experience of community-creation via direct interactions on social media is reflected in comments from respondents such as the one above, as well as experiences such as Jenny's, in which she described particularly valuing the ability to tweet along with her friends in the UK whilst watching Forced Entertainment's *Complete Works* livestream.

However, as Sullivan acknowledges, those who actively tweet whilst watching broadcasts form only a small proportion of the online audience. Many audience members may not use social media as part of their online broadcast experiences at all, but even of those who do, engaging and interacting publicly with others was not the only way of participating. Around 20% of respondents reported messaging other people privately either before, during or after watching an online broadcast, and for others, actually engaging in dialogue was not why they used social media. Browsing or 'lurking' on social media to see what other people were saying about the production was common, with 26% saying they had looked on social media before watching and 21% that they had looked whilst they watched. In Anja's recollection of watching the Globe's *Dream*, described earlier in this chapter, she points to how she had followed the show's hashtag; she does not mention actually tweeting herself, but indicates that following along was enough to create a sense of community with other people watching, suggesting that less active modes of social media participation can

also have an important part to play in how audiences might imagine or perceive themselves to be part of a community.

Whilst it is the tweets themselves that remain as a record of reception, the impact that seeing those tweets had on shaping other audience members' experiences remains largely undocumented. Seeing and reading other people's reactions to a production can be as much as part of 'the process of meaning-making' for audiences as engaging directly. In my discussion of the social media conversation around Forced Entertainment's *Complete Works* livestream, I suggest that whilst the Twitter conversation demonstrated how audiences were engaging and creating a community around the production, the nature of the conversation and the fact that theatre practitioners, critics, and academics dominated the conversation, may have risked alienating other audience members who perhaps did not feel qualified to participate (Nicholas, 2018: 89). I argue that the public nature of the tweets – their visibility in the public domain – constitutes audience performances that can 'exert pressure on the broadcast experience, changing how theatre companies interact with their audiences, as well as determining how other audience members approach and relate to the work' (89).

As well as generating conversation and a sense of community, audience 'performances' on social media can also shape reception in other ways. In his interview, Michael stated that communicating with others 'can become a significant part of being an audience for any Shakespeare performance' but related this less to how this might build communities, than how it can act as a way for individuals to display their knowledge. He suggests that tweeting about a production can be 'a way of saying this is who I am, this is what I do, showing off our cultural capital'. Michael goes into some detail about his use of social media during online broadcasts. He

describes in particular how he felt alienated by the tweets around Globe's *Dream*, explaining that:

> Despite my misgivings about aspects of the production, it felt like a big deal, and something that a lot of people were participating in. There was a sense that the mostly female audience were investing themselves in it, and in return seeing themselves reflected and validated – so of course that's when I personally lost interest, because it was no longer about Shakespeare.
>
> (Michael, 22 March 2018)

As Sullivan writes, the production's focus 'on issues of sexuality and gender proved especially compelling for tweeting spectators', with comments focused on the gender swapping of roles and the commitment to inclusive and diverse casting (2018: 70). It is through these posts, Sullivan suggests, that the audience began to 'work through some of the thorny questions that the production raised concerning gender, sexuality and cultural representation' (71). Because he sees the conversation as veering away from 'Shakespeare' – the aspect that he most values about the production – Michael loses interest and disengages from the conversation. Here then, different values, audience performances and ideas about what Shakespeare in performance can 'be about' shape the kinds of conversation and communities that form online around a broadcast. In Michael's case, he could understand why other audience members were valuing the production in certain ways but made a decision that particular conversation was not for him. It is possible that in other cases, a sense of being excluded from the social media conversation may not be such an active or conscious choice.

The use of social media by audiences of online broadcasts does not generate communities of reception in neutral ways. The visibility of the conversations mean that social media can be a way of creating and building communities, but can also,

usually unintentionally, play a role in gatekeeping theatrical communities, determining who feels able to participate. Even if audiences do not engage in conversations about the production directly, browsing the social media discussion can still be an important part of building an imagined community for an audience member; this can be positive as in Anja's description of watching the Globe's *Dream*, but may also reinforce a sense of exclusion, especially for the new audiences that the broadcasts are ostensibly designed to attract. When considering social media use in the reception of theatre (in all media forms) it is important to pay attention not only to the comments and conversations themselves as evidence of audience response, but to consider these comments *as* performances in themselves, and to ask what kind of dynamics they set up between spectators.

As the screenshots below of Cheek by Jowl's stream of *Périclès* (2018) show, online streaming platforms have begun to integrate 'social media' type comment feeds into the spaces in which audiences actually watch online theatre, making such a focus on the dynamics of audience response even more important. On YouTube, a live comment function is available in a panel to the right of the main screen, on which audience members can publicly comment on the production in real time (Fig. 21). The Facebook Live panel includes a similar live comment feature, with the addition of 'reaction buttons' which audiences can click to register their emotional responses during the stream (Fig. 22). Additionally, Facebook can notify you when someone you are 'friends' with is also watching, and allows you to privately message whilst remaining in the Facebook Live panel. It also allows you to watch via a pop-up screen, allowing you to continue to browse your feed as you watch. Live view-

counts, visible on both platforms, enable you to see how many people are watching in that moment, contributing to the sense of participating in a wider community.[51]

On both platforms, the comment features can be hidden, and the main panel can be maximised to full-screen. The relatively low number of comments and reactions compared to the number of views for *Périclès*, suggests that, on the whole, audiences of online theatre either still value a more focused experience, or that they are unused to the platforms and are uncomfortable with posting so visibly online.[52] Despite this, what the integration of social features into these platforms show is that increasingly, rather than social media and communication being an addition to streaming, online streaming *is* a social activity. Although it remains to be seen whether or not audiences for Shakespeare broadcasts will come to fully utilise their features, the design of these platforms to encourage communication suggests that the 'feedback loops' between audience members not only exist in experiences where audiences are not physically co-present, but that they are an important and valuable part of those experiences. It will be important to interrogate the social dynamics that this kind of communication creates, and the impact this has on audience experience as it potentially becomes an ever more significant feature of both on- and off-line theatrical spectatorship.

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[51] Similar products allowing viewers to communicate whilst watching are also being developed outside of social media platforms. For example, the EU-funded 2-IMMERSE collaborative project worked to develop software for multi-screen entertainment, with their 'Theatre at Home Experience' project designed to allow two households to watch a theatre production at the same time, and to communicate during the interval. The evaluation of the prototype is set out in Cesar *et al.* (2017).

[52] After being available on-demand for one month, the stream had 3253 views on Facebook Live, and had attracted 67 reactions, 78 shares and just 9 comments, the majority of which were users 'tagging' their friends to alert them to the stream. The stream had 2135 views on YouTube, 28 likes, 2 live comments and 1 non-live comment. The low level of commenting may have been affected by the fact that the stream was in French with subtitles, potentially requiring more focus on the production from non-French speakers, making commenting or tweeting more difficult.

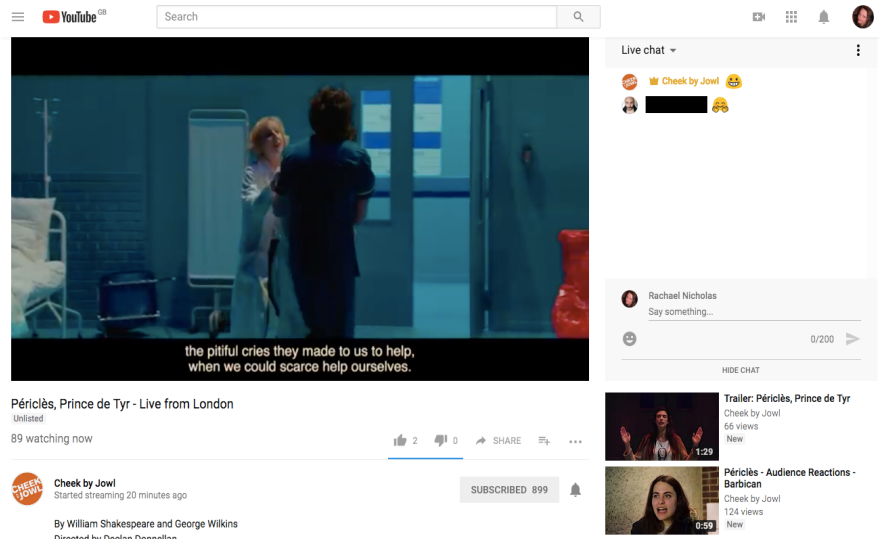

Figure 21: Cheek by Jowl's *Périclès* on YouTube. Screenshot taken by the author, 19 April 2018.

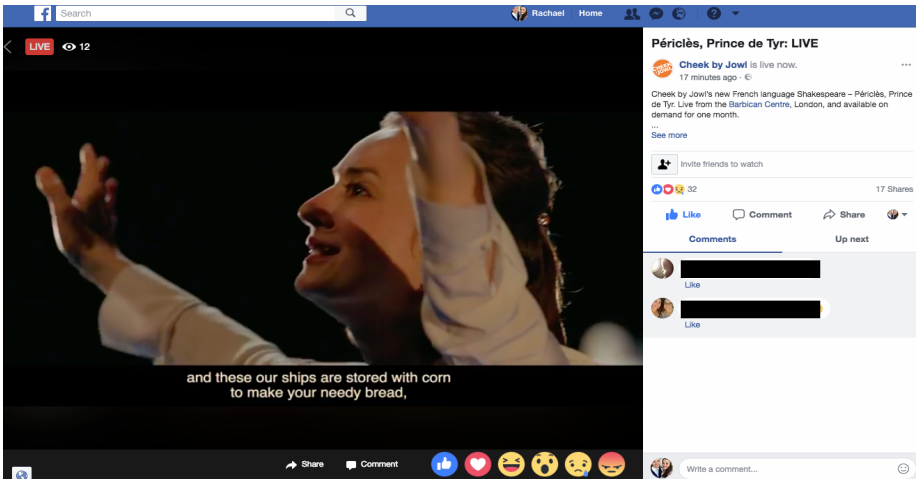

Figure 22: Cheek by Jowl's *Périclès* on Facebook Live. Screenshot taken by the author, 19 April 2018.

Conclusion: Shakespeare's Digital Value

Erin Sullivan concludes that 'an emphasis on the diversity of audience experience may be the most important lesson we can take away' from her investigation into the use of social media and Shakespeare broadcasts (Sullivan, 2018: 72). In a similar way, perhaps the most significant lesson of this investigation into online

spectatorship is that the approaches audiences take to watching online Shakespeare broadcasts, and the resulting experiences that they have, are divergent and multiple. Being able to encounter Shakespeare in performance outside of the specified times and spaces of theatrical reception meant that the audiences I spoke to were able to play a large part in constructing their own experiences, privileging the aspects of the encounter with performance or a particular production that they valued most. Whilst online spectatorship might frustrate an impulse to generalise about online broadcast experiences, this chapter has shed light on the processes by which audiences negotiate their online viewing of theatre. The choices audiences make in watching theatre online – the features of theatrical spectatorship they try to replicate, those they are happy to leave behind, and the digital additions they make – illuminate how audiences value different aspects of watching Shakespeare in performance, and how this might be shifting in a digital age.

Although audiences are arguably afforded a greater degree of agency in online broadcasts, this chapter has shown that audiences are not completely free to shape their own experiences. Karin van Es's concept of 'constellations of liveness', in which each incident of liveness online is constructed and experienced through the interaction of multiple agents, can also be extended to describe how audiences experienced other elements of performance. As well as constellations of liveness, we can also identify constellations of co-presence and of community. The audience member's own desire to communicate or feel part of a wider community is not just created by imagining others watching but is constructed by the positioning of the broadcast as an event, the hype around the broadcast, the algorithms and affordances of social media and other digital technologies, and the responses of other audience members. The theatre also has a part to play in determining

spectatorship practices, with audiences sometimes consciously replicating theatrical viewing conditions at home, or gaining a sense of pleasure from consuming the public event of theatre in a private way. Whilst I have dealt with each of these 'constellations' separately here, elements related to space, time, and communication are variously connected and in conversation with each other. The constellation is a particularly helpful metaphor for understanding the diversity of audience experiences, in that constellations describe perceived and imaginary connections, rather than permanent and unchangeable relationships. Audiences cannot change the position of each 'star', but they can and do change the ways in which they are connected together to shape their experiences.

The constellation is also a helpful metaphor for understanding how Shakespeare functions in these online audience experiences. Although I asked audiences about Shakespeare broadcasts in particular, a comparative study of the reception of non-Shakespearean broadcasts was beyond the scope of this investigation, meaning that any conclusions about the degree to which the experiences described in this chapter are specific to broadcasts of Shakespeare plays must be speculative. However, as quoted above, for 53% of respondents, the fact the play was by Shakespeare was a motivation for watching. Coupled with the fact that 78% of respondents identified themselves as 'Shakespeare lovers', this suggests that 'Shakespeare' was a key factor in many audience experiences. There was evidence too that some of the behaviours described by audiences may have been specific to Shakespeare spectatorship. Often reasons for watching were overlaid with educational goals related to increasing personal knowledge of Shakespeare's plays. Two respondents described taking notes whilst watching, with one pausing the stream 'to look at footnotes in the book'. Presumably referring to a

printed edition of the play, this parallel analysis of text and performance demonstrates how text and performance can be brought together in online broadcasts, allowing for reflection in a way that live performance or watching at the cinema might not. This approach resembles a particular type of 'classroom' approach to Shakespeare described in Chapter 2, which values productions of Shakespeare for their ability to shed light on the text, rather than as an experience in and of itself.

For Anja, watching Shakespeare productions online was also valued as a kind of learning experience, describing it as 'almost a little course into the Shakespeare canon I do on my own'. Learning more about Shakespeare was also a big motivation for Marie, who writes that 'Shakespeare is meant to be spoken and performed and that is how the canon comes alive […] I need other people's ideas and energy to feed my understanding of the plays, or even to enjoy them fully'. Marie values seeing the plays in performance not only for performance's ability to illuminate text, but as the way she feels Shakespeare should be encountered in order to be fully appreciated. A desire to broaden Shakespeare knowledge was also a motivation for Michael, but he writes that because of his professional involvement in Shakespearean theatre, he also feels 'an obligation to support any and all meaningful Shakespeare activity, and to promote it and respond to it'. In this, Michael values Shakespeare not just as a group of plays, or as cultural and intellectual capital, but as a living industry that needs to be supported and promoted. For each of these interviewees, and for many of the survey respondents, Shakespeare played some part in their reasons for watching, and in some cases, it determined their approach to watching online, whether that be stopping to take notes, or watching all the way through to fully appreciate the production.

As an element in the constellation of online broadcast experiences, Shakespeare's value was not fixed but differed across productions and was dependent on the audience member's own attitudes and reasons for watching. For example, Jenny, who had only seen Forced Entertainment's narrative adaptations of the plays, hardly mentioned Shakespeare at all in her interview but focused more on the value of being able to watch a production along with her long-distance friends. Being able to watch Shakespeare productions in different spaces and at different times from the moment of performance allows audiences to value them differently, potentially decentring Shakespeare as the locus of value within those experiences. With no clear cultural intermediary determining how they *should* value their experiences, online broadcasts probably demonstrate the most potential of the encounters discussed in the thesis for actualising Michael D. Friedman's prediction that broadcasts might make watching Shakespeare in performance seem less like an elite activity. Online broadcasts enable audiences to see spaces, such as their homes, as valid spaces in which to encounter Shakespeare, allowing Shakespeare in performance to be associated as much with sitting at home in your pyjamas, as with the cultural prestige of the theatre auditorium.

However, the majority of respondents in this chapter were familiar with live theatre and Shakespeare in performance, and it is possible that those who demonstrated ease with encountering Shakespeare outside of the theatre felt able to do so because they already felt a sense of ownership over the material. This investigation was not large enough to be representative of the online audience for Shakespeare broadcasts as a whole, and thus cannot determine whether or not they are widening the diversity of the Shakespeare audience. Reaching and understanding audiences outside of theatre networks, if indeed they do exist,

remains a significant challenge, but will be necessary in future research to find out if online broadcasts are truly extending access to a wider audience, or if this new form of distribution simply allows those who are already comfortable in the company of Shakespeare to make themselves even more at home.

It is, however, evident from this investigation that online broadcasts are at least increasing the accessibility of theatre for audiences already interested in Shakespeare and/or theatre. Answering for all the Shakespeare productions they saw online, 61% of respondents reported that, in at least one instance, watching online was the only way that they could have possibly seen a broadcast and 50% said that although they may have wanted to watch a broadcast live, that they could not attend due to distance or time. When given free space to leave comments at the end of the survey, respondents were overwhelmingly positive, and keen to reinforce how online broadcasts had given them access to far more productions. One wrote 'I LOVE that online broadcasts of Shakespeare exist [; they] allow me to see productions that would otherwise be barred to me completely'. Another explained that broadcasts were 'a wonderful tool for research and education, but also I can't even begin to describe the difference it makes NOT to miss all these performances'. Others speak of the value of the broadcasts, writing that online broadcasts have 'made a huge difference', that they are 'really valuable' and that they represent an 'invaluable opportunity' to see performances that they would otherwise miss.

The kinds of spectatorship practices described in this chapter are still emergent and are continually developing. It is possible that some of the approaches described here, for example the way that audiences derived pleasure from the transgression between public and private space, are partially rooted in the novelty of the experience. Moreover, as discussed above, it is yet to be seen whether

audiences and theatre companies will begin to take full advantage of the commenting and audience feedback features available on platforms such as Facebook Live. If theatre companies continue to seek to use the internet as a distribution channel for their work, then it is likely that patterns of engagement will change as these platforms continue to develop. As well as reporting positive experiences, many respondents expressed the hope that online broadcasts of Shakespeare would continue, suggesting that there is a continued appetite and enthusiasm for engaging with Shakespeare in performance through online broadcasts and that there will be a ready audience, if not necessarily a new one, for any future streams of Shakespeare productions.

Conclusion - A New Theatre History?

This thesis has explored the ways in which audiences have engaged with Shakespeare in performance through three different kinds of digital distribution. In drawing on audience research at three points of encounter – the cinema, the school, and online – this project has developed existing work on broadcast spectatorship, much of which has focused on the aesthetics and production processes of cinema broadcasts in order to describe a general or intended broadcast experience. Through this research a more complex picture of broadcast reception has emerged. The audiences I encountered engaged with Shakespeare in performance in multiple and diverse ways, both across and within each type of broadcast encounter. Broadcast experiences, this research demonstrates, cannot be easily generalised; they are multifaceted encounters that are highly dependent, not only on the production and its mediation but on the specific contexts and conditions of reception. The audiences I surveyed, observed, and interviewed did not experience broadcasts as unmediated remote encounters with Shakespeare in performance, but as experiences that were shaped by the 'micro-cultural contexts' of the locations in which they watched.

The encounters detailed in this thesis are not only encounters with Shakespeare but with various institutions, spaces, platforms, and other people. In particular, this research has highlighted the importance of various cultural brokers or intermediaries in facilitating and shaping broadcast experiences. In Chapter 1, I found that screening venues were not only central to NT Live's marketing strategy, but shaped how audiences approached and valued their experiences. Similarly in Chapter 2, the teacher played an important and active role in determining how and what students watched, as well as how they valued what they watched. These

mediators or facilitators are vital to the success of both cinema and school broadcasts, providing access to an existing infrastructure and audience network. Importantly, by providing premium content for the venues and valuable teaching resources for teachers, the broadcasts are reciprocally beneficial, meaning that venues and teachers are invested in promoting them to their audiences/students. Whilst platforms such as YouTube and Facebook Live set technological parameters for how audiences are able to engage with online broadcasts, and some theatre companies have partnered with corporations such as the BBC to help reach wider audiences, the cultural mediators at work in online broadcasts are less obvious. It is possible that the current lack of a clear cultural intermediary who has both access to an existing audience and a reason to actively promote theatrical content may be inhibiting the ability of free online broadcasts to reach new and wider audiences.

However, for those audiences who did watch, the lack of cultural brokers in online experiences resulted in more scope for negotiating experience and value for themselves. Indeed, agency has emerged as a central theme throughout this thesis, demonstrating that rather than simply 'robbing' audiences of their 'rights of reception' (Cochrane and Bonner, 2014), each type of broadcast encounter affords audiences differing degrees of agency over their experiences. Generally, the organisation of the chapters has reflected an increased scope for audiences to control how they paid attention to the broadcasts. In cinema and school experiences, theatre companies and mediators attempted to exert control over audience attention by restricting agency spatially, and in all encounters, attention was controlled by restricting how the broadcasts could be accessed through time. Despite this, there was evidence in each encounter that audiences had some degree of agency in determining their own experiences. Audiences were active agents in the reception process, but their

agency was not limitless. Rather, they constructed and negotiated their experiences in conversation with multiple factors that might include pre-existing values about theatre and media, production and distribution strategies, the particular site of reception, affordability, and competing priorities or responsibilities. In this, Karin van Es's concept of the 'constellation' offers a potentially useful framework for modelling reception, allowing us to consider reception alongside production and distribution strategies, and to account for multiple approaches to spectatorship.

Recognising the agency of audiences also helps to reframe some of the central discussions around broadcast reception. 'Liveness' for example, is shown to be constructed in relation to, but not completely dependent on, the way that a theatre company chooses to distribute a broadcast. Similarly, whilst interval features and the material around schools broadcasts are likely to constitute attempts to shape reception, this research highlights the ability of audiences to ignore, mute, or switch off such material, limiting its impact. Understanding reception in this way also allows a consideration of the way in which other audience members, both co-present or otherwise, form part of this 'constellation'. Based on theories of theatrical exchange that privilege physical co-presence, it might have been predicted that a sense of community would progressively disintegrate from the communal experiences in cinemas and schools to isolated online experiences. Instead, the ways in which broadcast audiences experienced community were equally complex across each encounter. Both online and venue audiences reported that they had felt 'part of something' but that they did not feel 'connected' to one another, even when physically present or attending as part of a group.

These findings trouble the idea that a sense of community in performance necessarily results from audiences being physically co-present to each other.

Previous work on community in broadcasts has focused on social media use to explain the ways in which remote audiences connect and communicate (Sullivan, 2018). Whilst this thesis has shown that social media was a significant aspect of some experiences, particularly for online audiences, there were generally low levels of social media use across venue and school audiences, suggesting that the way audiences construct a sense of community and relate to other audience members during broadcasts goes beyond the use of social media. Instead, community building was often a complex and fragile process involving multiple levels of identification with both co-present and remote audience members. Like Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities', in which communities are imagined by those who see themselves as part of that community rather than being defined by physical co-presence or interaction, in these broadcast experiences a sense of community relied less on actual co-presence than on the idea of participating alongside other audience members (Anderson, 1983: 36). Indeed, audiences encountering each other, whether on screen, in person or online, often resulted in tensions or uncomfortable moments which broke the illusion of cohesive spectatorship.

Encounters with other audience members were particularly likely to cause tensions if those audiences were participating in different or divergent ways. In the introduction I proposed that attitudes towards broadcast spectatorship were bound up with ideas about the value of different modes of participation, and their suitability for encountering theatre. This investigation has demonstrated that these ideas about value shaped audience motivations, their experiences, and their relationships with other audience members. Audiences across all encounters actively negotiated value for themselves alongside (sometimes competing) attempts by theatre companies, venues, schools and online platforms to determine value. The different ways in which

audiences valued their experiences challenge the idea that there is necessarily a ‘‘right time’ (live, as it happens) and a ‘right place’ (a cultural venue, whether a theatre or a cinema) to enjoy some cultural experiences’ (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2010: 6). The responses show that there are ways of valuing encounters with Shakespeare in performance outside of the theatre and the cinema, as well as beyond live transmission. Whether watching in their pyjamas, live-tweeting, or watching five minutes of an online broadcast, there are examples throughout this thesis of audience members valuing experiences that deviate from live, communal reception in a space specifically designed for watching theatre or film.

There are, however, also a significant number of examples of audiences consciously replicating ‘theatrical’ modes of reception, such as watching live, or setting aside time to watch in order to reduce interruptions. Whilst audiences are flexible over the actual times and places of reception, this research shows that many audience members still strongly value the focused attention and sense of participation involved in watching in a theatre or cinema. Whilst there are no definitive or conclusive ‘right’ times and places for audiences to enjoy Shakespeare in performance, audience members still have strong views on their preferred ways of enjoying and engaging with such content. These modes of participation are multiple, and are decided by audience members (or *for* audience members in the case of school broadcasts) based on previous spectatorship experiences, ideas about the value of Shakespeare, theatre, and different media, and other factors such as availability, cost, and the impact of participating in a certain way. Alongside the cinema, the home and the school emerge as viable spaces for watching Shakespeare in performance, because, as this thesis argues, value is negotiated

and determined by audiences, rather than being inherently located in a particular place or particular type of reception.

Approaching value as something that is constantly negotiated by audiences means that, as well as indicating a link between how audiences value content and how they choose to participate, this thesis has also been interested in the reverse idea: that broadcast experiences have the potential to alter how audiences value Shakespeare in performance. In each chapter I have turned to interrogate the hypothesis that broadcasts have the potential to alter the 'elite' status of watching Shakespeare in performance. Whilst understanding the long-term impact of broadcasts on concepts of Shakespeare's cultural value is outside the scope of this study, the results suggest that, counter to Michael D. Friedman's prediction, the increased popularity of Shakespeare broadcasts may not straightforwardly correlate with the consumption of Shakespeare in performance seeming 'less and less like an elite activity' (Friedman, 2016: 480).

Indeed, in a number of the broadcast experiences described here, Shakespeare's 'elite' cultural status was reinforced rather than challenged. At the cinema, broadcasts were promoted as a premium experience, elevating the activity of cinema-going rather than 'downgrading' Shakespearean spectatorship, with audiences at the Maltings perceiving their experiences specifically as encounters with 'high quality' theatre. Complex negotiations around Shakespearean value were also at work in school experiences, with the broadcasts performing a kind of double-manoeuvre in which the 'high' cultural value of Shakespeare was made accessible, whilst also emphasising the cultural and educational of watching and understanding Shakespeare. Online broadcast experiences demonstrated the greatest potential to alter ideas about the value of Shakespeare and theatre. Even in this relatively small

sample of data there are glimpses of audiences taking advantage of the flexibility granted by online spectatorship to create new ways of engaging with productions based on what they personally value (or do not value) about theatrical spectatorship and Shakespeare. However, the fact that some audience members found pleasure in this transgression implies that the creation of new ways of engaging with Shakespeare performance might rely on already being in possession of a high level of Shakespearean cultural capital. Like the cinema audience members who were keen to state that Shakespeare was not a hugely significant aspect of their experiences, instead placing value on 'good' theatre, these audiences recognised the 'right' or usual ways of valuing and engaging with Shakespeare and performance, and consciously rejected them.

Ultimately, the modes of participation with Shakespeare broadcasts demonstrated in this thesis tend to engage with, and sometimes reinforce, existing modes of valuing Shakespeare. By offering new ways of accessing and watching theatre, broadcasts do offer new ways of valuing Shakespeare in performance. However, this potential is inhibited by dominant narratives of Shakespeare's value that are deeply entrenched in UK culture, influencing the ideas that audiences have about Shakespeare and the 'correct' ways to encounter his work. That is not to say that broadcasts are not having an impact on the cultural value of watching Shakespeare, but that the reception of broadcasts is bound up in existing and multiple frameworks of value that determine how audiences approach and understand their broadcast experiences. Understanding audiences as active agents in the process of negotiating and circulating cultural value means understanding that value does not change via seismic shifts, but incrementally, via a culmination of individual encounters over time.

Whilst broadcasts may not yet have had an impact on how audiences are valuing Shakespeare*,* they may, along with other digital modes of participation, be having an impact on how audiences are valuing and understanding theatre spectatorship more generally. Audiences across the broadcast encounters tended to prioritise and value the convenience and flexibility of broadcasts over the concentrated, communal, 'live' experience of travelling to the theatre. A decade after the launch of NT Live, these shifting values may already be influencing how theatres are making work available. Having initially made it clear that its broadcasts would only be available to watch live, or as encore screenings, in cinemas, NT Live has recently announced plans to make a significant number of past productions available to schools, libraries and universities via two online platforms. A step up from the 'NT Live, On Demand in Schools' service, which provided free access to a number of broadcasts to teachers whilst on school property, these platforms represent a further move away from NT Live's stated commitment to 'preserving the live, communal experience and the sense of event through […] big screen exhibitions' (National Theatre, 2017). Announcing the new scheme, the chief executive of the National Theatre, Lisa Burger said that the current system of watching NT Live recordings at the company's archive was 'oversubscribed and not terribly convenient' and that there was a 'real hunger from people to be able to see and study the best contemporary British theatre'; she stated that 'the really important thing is to get the work out to more people' (Snow, 2019). In her reasoning, the desire from audiences for greater convenience and accessibility, and to both see and study theatre via screen media, match up with one of the NT's core values: to 'get the work out' to the greatest possible number of people, many of whom will be, in this case, students and young people. Whilst it does not meet the frequent requests by audiences for DVDs

or publicly available on-demand access to productions, the NT's move to increase access to past NT Live broadcasts shows an institution beginning to shift its values in order to meet those of audiences and their access demands.

Although this thesis has been focused on the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts in particular, the results also provide wider insight into how approaches and attitudes to watching theatre in general are beginning to change. Whilst audiences answered questions about their encounters with Shakespeare broadcasts specifically, much of what they had to say about their modes of participation and values could be applied to broadcasts of other plays and types of performance. The relevance of Shakespeare altered across encounters and across audiences; whilst it was essential to an understanding of the RSC's Schools' Broadcasts, it was perhaps less central in understanding online and venue experiences. Indeed, talking to cinema and online audiences decentralised Shakespeare as the focus of the investigation as it became clear that Shakespeare was just one valued element of many in their encounters.

It is possible to consider how, in relation to understanding broadcast reception and theatrical reception more broadly, 'Shakespeare' functions in a similar way to the 'media scripts' of which Katherine Rowe warns. Isolating experiences with Shakespeare for the purpose of study can reinforce academic hierarchies that favour the study of Shakespeare over different kinds of theatre and performance, which can actually restrict our understanding of how reception functions. This study has not been comparative and so is unable to provide conclusive insight into whether the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts differs in any significant way to the reception of other digitally distributed work. A consequence of this is that whilst the research has been able to provide insights into some of the ways that Shakespeare affects

reception, it has often slipped away from its Shakespeare-centric script. This has meant that, as well as being able to tell us about the reception of Shakespeare broadcasts, this research has opened up a much wider set of questions about the reception of broadcasts more generally, and about the nature of theatrical exchange. In suggesting that the audience are central to the construction of 'liveness', in questioning the way that 'community' functions as an element of reception, and in focusing on the different forms of agency and attention involved in these experiences, this research works to deconstruct and examine some of the central elements of the theatrical experience. It has not only considered how these things may be changing as a result of digital modes of participation, but also poses questions about how they function in 'live', in-person, iterations of the theatrical encounter. In not quite sticking to its 'Shakespeare script', this thesis has been able to explore a wider range of questions. Researchers working on Shakespeare, media and performance, this suggests, should be as aware of how focusing on Shakespeare might limit or shape their research findings, as they are of how studying particular media might impose its own 'scripts' on research.

In relating broadcast experiences to in-person encounters with theatre, I have argued that they should be considered alongside, and on the same spectrum as, each other. As I argued in the introduction, there is space in Nick Ridout's definition of theatre as 'a constellation of bungled, missed or difficult encounters' for the remote encounters described here to be considered as legitimate encounters with theatre (2006: 15). Indeed, it is my hope that the experiences documented here encourage theatre scholars and practitioners to reconsider and expand their definition of 'what counts' as an experience of theatre. As this research has shown, audiences themselves are already finding value, not just in the access that

broadcasts provide, but in the alternative ways of participating and engaging that they make possible. In turn, theatre creators and companies are also slowly beginning to find ways of valuing the interactions audiences have with theatre outside of theatre buildings. It is important, then, that as scholars of theatre, and of Shakespeare, we move beyond debating what the value and impact of broadcasts might be, and begin to pay attention to the different ways in which audiences (and to a lesser extent, theatre companies) are already valuing remote encounters with theatre in venues, in schools, online and elsewhere.

Although it was not the intention of the research at the outset a number of practical implications for broadcasting institutions and other stakeholders have emerged. The findings in Chapter 1, especially around how audiences valued localness and 'quality', may be useful for screening venues looking to develop audiences for their broadcasts in a particular way. Chapter 2 provides potentially helpful insights for theatres looking to develop educational outreach projects centered around digitally distributing work. In particular, my findings around how students and teachers used Twitter could help inform strategies around developing ways to foster genuine engagement and interaction that allow students to speak about Shakespeare, and actually to be heard and acknowledged. Chapter 3 may be informative for theatres looking to utilise online streaming as a form of distribution, especially in the way it highlights the importance of mediators in helping to reach online audiences, and in its findings about how audiences are able to experience 'liveness' or a sense of being part of something without temporal and spatial co-presence.

The most obvious and immediate implications of this project, however, are for future research into broadcasts and broadcast reception. In accessing audiences

who were geographically, and sometimes temporally, dispersed, this project has had to employ a mix of audience-research methods. Whilst some of these, such as questionnaires and classroom observation, have drawn on tried-and-tested research methods, others, such as online interviewing across different platforms, have been more methodologically experimental, contributing to the developing body of audience research work in theatre and performance studies and, in particular, offering ways of approaching the broadcast audience. By using audience-research methodologies to focus on a relatively small number of reception sites, this research has been able to demonstrate that the way audiences experience and value Shakespeare broadcasts is highly dependent on the specific conditions of reception. I have argued that as theatre reception expands beyond the auditorium, sites of reception remain important even as they become multiple and abstracted. As most audience members experience a broadcast in a space different to that of the researcher, broadcasting makes audience research an increasingly important tool for understanding reception. Furthermore, as theatrical distribution fragments across media, reception practices multiply, making it less possible to make generalised conclusions about theatrical spectatorship based on analyses of productions alone. In a theatrical ecology in which different ways of experiencing theatre are constantly developing, undertaking audience research becomes even more important, and even necessary, if we want to understand reception.

By taking the site of reception, rather than the processes of production, as a starting point, this thesis has drawn on the approaches of 'New Cinema History'. Such an approach extends the concept of 'reception' to include not only the 'moments in which audiences are primarily focused on the screen', but the way in which experience is shaped by the contexts – spatial, social, and personal – in which

they watch (Maltby, 2011: 9). In paying close attention to the experience of theatre performance at its sites of reception, this thesis contributes to a growing body of audience research-based work in theatre studies that might be collectively identified as comprising a 'New Theatre History', a body of work that prioritises the documentation of contextualised reception alongside that of playtexts or production techniques. With this thesis, I argue that such a history, if it is to consider the reception of theatre in the twenty-first century, needs also to consider the different sites of reception and modes of participation created by digital distribution. It needs to acknowledge that for some, the value of theatrical exchange does not reside in physical and temporal co-presence, and that experiences with theatre broadcasts, even if they only last for a matter of minutes, 'count' in very real ways. This study offers one way of 'counting' these experiences, and demonstrates the insights, questions and research possibilities that arise when these forms of reception are taken seriously as encounters with theatre.

By using audience research methodologies, this thesis has provided some insight into how, where, and why a small section of audience members are engaging with Shakespeare broadcasts. Contextualising audience responses within their site(s) of reception has reframed theatre broadcast experiences not as happening *to* passive audiences, but as negotiated and constructed by active audience members. These negotiations are shaped by a complex set of factors including the broadcast material, the physical site of reception, relationships with other audience members, cultural mediators such as teachers, and existing ideas about the value of the play, theatre company, and reception venue. Understanding the work of the audience in this way has opened up new possibilities for interrogating the theatrical exchange,

providing a framework for approaching theatrical reception that allows for alternative (and potentially new) distribution and reception contexts.

There are, of course, other ways of approaching and understanding broadcast audiences and their experiences. The particularity of my research design, which was broad in looking at three types of encounter and narrow in its focus on specific sites of reception, provided unique perspectives in that it has allowed a wide-angle overview of broad themes ranging across broadcast encounters extrapolated from insight into individual experiences. As a result, however, it has been limited in its ability to consider different kinds of reception site within each encounter, and does not produce results that can be used to describe the broadcast audience in general terms. The results are also shaped by the fact that participants were largely recruited via my own extended networks, and so may well be more familiar with Shakespeare and theatre than the audience in general. However, the broad scope of this project, and ability to focus on only a handful of case studies, opens up opportunities for the development of further research on broadcast reception and audience experiences. For example, further research into reception at a greater number of venues across a wider geographical area might describe some trends in reception at specific types of venue and in specific towns or cities. Similarly, research into the reception of other kinds of digital distribution, such as recorded theatre available on pay-to-watch platforms, and into international reception, would provide further insight into the wider impact of digital distribution on reception practices. The reception of digitally distributed theatre within schools also emerges here as particularly urgent site of research that has so far received relatively little attention. Talking to students about their experiences, and looking more broadly at the ways in which Shakespeare and theatre are used in the classroom, would be important ways of extending the

research undertaken in Chapter 2. Whilst this project used Shakespeare as a lens, future work might take the reception of digitally distributed work by particular companies, or significant productions – factors that emerged here as significant motivating factors for audiences – as a focus. Such an approach could further build on existing work that analyses camerawork and directing styles, integrating it with audience research in a way that was not possible in this project.

As a researcher, I am unavoidably present in the focus of this thesis, as well as in its analysis and discussion. As someone who grew up in the UK and attended a state-run secondary school throughout the 2000s, and who began watching theatre regularly around the launch of NT Live, my own experiences and attitudes towards both Shakespeare and theatre broadcasts have been shaped by the processes of value production I discuss in each chapter. I began this thesis with an account of my first encounter with a theatre broadcast at the cinema, an experience that was among my first experiences with theatre in any form. In the decade following that first broadcast, digital distribution has been a significant and regular feature of my experiences of theatre, helping to develop an interest in theatre and Shakespeare and performance. For me, and for some of my research participants, digital distribution is not a 'new' way of accessing theatre but an important part of the theatrical landscape, integral to the way in which many audience members access theatre in the UK and internationally. Audiences across all forms of encounter examined here articulated how important they felt broadcasts were, either for themselves, or others. Understanding the impact of broadcasts more fully requires approaching broadcasts not as a potential threat to live theatre attendance, or as a gateway to reaching broader and more diverse audiences, but as experiences that are already highly valued by audiences. This thesis suggests that theatre

broadcasting will continue to feature, perhaps increasingly so, as a feature of the theatrical ecology. The audiences of such broadcasts and their experiences not only represent an important, and exciting, focus of future research but offer an invaluable opportunity to fundamentally rethink how we conceive of theatrical reception in the twenty-first century.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Screening Venues Audience Questionnaire

Study title: The Impact of Theatre Broadcasts on Audiences for Shakespeare
Name of Researcher: Rachael Nicholas

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study by completing the following questionnaire.

My study is interested in finding out about audience experiences of theatre broadcasts, particularly of Shakespeare plays. A lot of academic research into theatre broadcasts ignores or generalises the experience of actual audience members – in this survey I am interested to hear about your own experiences of attending broadcasts, as well as your opinions, thoughts and feelings about those experiences. Your responses will inform research into the cinematic and digital distribution of theatre, as well as contributing to a case study into the relationship between this venue, its audiences, and live theatre broadcasts.

It is entirely up to you whether you participate but your responses would make a valuable contribution to my research. This survey has been handed to all attendees of tonight's broadcast at this venue and I hope to receive between 20-40 responses.

All survey responses will be anonymous in the publication of any findings. Data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy. Responses from completed questionnaires will be collated for analysis; once this is complete, the original questionnaires will be securely stored for 10 years and then destroyed.

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

Participants in this survey should be 18 or over, please tick here to confirm that you are 18 or over: ☐

Questionnaire instructions:

With the support of The Maltings, this survey has been handed to all attendees of tonight's broadcast at this venue. The survey has been designed to take around 10 minutes so that you

can complete it before or after the broadcast, or during the interval. Feel free to take the survey away to complete if you'd prefer – you can return it to the venue on your next visit or post it to the address at the end of the survey.

Please feel free to leave any of the questions blank.

These questions are about the venue and your attendance at theatre broadcasts:

How long did it take you to travel here today?
- 1 – 20 minutes
- 21 – 40 minutes
- 41 – 60 minutes
- Over an hour

What method of transport did you use? _____

Over the past 12 months, approximately how many times have you visited this venue (for any reason)?
- This is the first time
- 2 – 5 times
- 5 – 10 times
- 10 – 15 times
- 15 – 20 times
- More than 20 times (please give an approximate number) _____

Of these visits, how many were to see a theatre broadcast?
- All of them
- More than half
- Around half
- Fewer than half
- This is my first live theatre broadcast

When attending theatre broadcasts at this venue, with whom do you usually attend?
- On my own
- With one other person
- As part of a small group of friends
- As part of an organised group or community.
- Other (please specify) _____

Apart from this venue, where else have you watched a theatre broadcast or a recorded theatre performance?

- At a different arts centre
- At a different cinema
- On television (TV broadcast)
- Streamed online for free
- Streamed or downloaded online via a subscription service (e.g. Globe Player)
- At a school
- On a DVD
- None of the above – only ever watched at this venue

Other (please specify) _____

How do you hear about upcoming theatre broadcasts? Tick all that apply.
- Advertising at this venue

- By searching this venue's website
- Other communications from this venue (email newsletter or social media)
- Interval announcements during the screenings
- From the social media accounts of theatre companies
- Other social media accounts
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify) _____

How many times in the past 12 months have you attended a **live** theatre performance in a theatre or other performance space?

- Never
- 1 – 3 times
- 4 – 6 times
- 6 – 9 times
- 9 – 15 times
- More than 15 times (please give an approximate number) _____

Please list the theatres or performance spaces that you've attended a live performance at over the last 12 months (or as many as you can remember!):

These questions are about you and your experiences:

Below are some statements. Please tick up to THREE statements that you most identify with:

- 'I'm a Shakespeare lover'
- 'I'm a theatre enthusiast'
- 'I find the theatre intimidating'
- 'I love film and cinema'
- 'I've been dragged along'
- 'I'm a culture vulture'
- 'I would like to participate more in the arts than I do at the moment'
- 'I'm hoping to learn something'
- I have an academic interest in theatre and/or Shakespeare'
- 'I enjoy seeing famous actors perform'
- None of the above. Please feel free to write your own:
  _____

When choosing theatre broadcasts to watch, how important to you is the fact that the play is a Shakespeare play?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Very important
At all

Please give some details explaining your answer:

Do you ever do any of the following things before watching a theatre broadcast in a cinema?

- Read reviews
- Read the play or read up on the plot
- Buy food or drink to consume during the screening
- Speak with friends about your plans to watch
- Post on social media about watching
- Meet with friends/have dinner with friends
- Other (please specify) _____

During the interval so you ever do any of the following?

- Chat with friends/other audience members about the play
- Post on social media about the play
- Buy food or drink
- Watch the interval features
- Leave the screening for the entire interval
- Other (please specify) _____

After screenings have you done any of the following?

- Chatted with friends/other audience members about the play
- Looked on social media to see what the reaction to the screening was
- Posted on social media about your experience
- Read reviews
- Booked tickets to see the show live
- Other (please specify) _____

Either thinking about your experiences of tonight's broadcast, or the last theatre broadcast you saw, please indicate with a tick how strongly you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree/ disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I was totally absorbed					
I felt connected to other audience members					
I felt part of something					
I felt like my response to the performance mattered					

Please explain your main reasons for attending theatre broadcasts and what you most enjoy about them?

Why have you chosen to watch tonight's screening? And why have you chosen to watch it at this venue?

Are there any downsides or things that you would change about theatre broadcast screenings?

Please use the space below to leave any other comments or thoughts regarding theatre broadcasts and/or Shakespeare:

What was your age at your last birthday? _____

Please describe your race/ethnicity:

_____

Gender:
How do you describe yourself?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Appendix 2: Online Audiences Questionnaire

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

Introduction

Study title: The Impact of Live Relays on Audiences for Shakespeare
Name of Researcher: Rachael Nicholas

I would like to invite you to take part in this study by completing the following questionnaire. It is entirely up to you whether you participate but your responses would be greatly valued.

My study is interested in finding out about audience experiences of theatre broadcasts, particularly of Shakespeare plays. In this survey I am interested to hear about your experiences of watching Shakespeare productions that have been broadcast **online**. It will begin by asking some questions about which productions you have accessed, followed by some questions about how and why you accessed them, and what you did whilst you were watching. The survey will then ask about your experiences with Shakespeare and will end with some questions about you.

This survey is for anyone who has watched any broadcast of a Shakespeare production **online** at any time, either live or recorded. The survey should take between 10 and 20 minutes to complete depending on the level of detail you provide. You are free to leave any of the questions blank; to do so, just click 'Next'. You can withdraw at any point by exiting the survey.

The responses to this study will inform research into the digital distribution of theatre within this PhD project, and may be used in future publications. I hope to attract as many responses to this survey as possible, but I expect there to be between 100 and 200 participants. The questionnaire can be completed anonymously and all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality. Responses from completed surveys will be collated for analysis; once this is complete the data will be securely stored for 10 years. All survey responses will remain anonymous in the publication of any findings. Data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy. To withdraw your responses once they have been submitted, contact the researcher quoting the reference number provided at the end of the survey. The contact details are given at the end of the survey.

Participants should be aged 18 or above.

Consent statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy. I confirm that I am 18 years old or older.

* 1. Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

These questions are about how you have accessed Shakespeare broadcasts online.

2. From the list below please select the online Shakespeare broadcasts that you have watched. Please select all that apply, but only those you accessed **online** - it doesn't matter if you watched live or caught up later. If you **also** accessed the production a different way (e.g. in the theatre) please indicate this in question seven, but if you **only** accessed it a different way please do not tick the box.

- [ ] Any of Shakespeare's Globe's 'Globe to Globe' productions streamed on The Space (2012)
- [ ] TR Warszawa's *2008:Macbeth* streamed from the Edinburgh Festival (2012)
- [ ] Shakespeare's Globe's Henriad Trilogy streamed on The Space from Monken Hadley Battlefied (2013)
- [ ] RSC's *Richard II* on the BBC's 'Shakespeare Lives' website (recorded in 2013 but streamed online in 2016)
- [ ] Cheek by Jowl's *Measure for Measure* (2015)
- [ ] Any of Forced Entertainment's *Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare* (First streamed in 2015 and again in 2016)
- [ ] Belarus Free Theatre's *King Lear* streamed from The Young Vic (2015)
- [ ] Black Theatre Live's *Macbeth* from Tara Theatre (2016)
- [ ] Talawa Theatre Company's *King Lear* from Royal Exchange Manchester (2016) streamed on BBC iPlayer and the 'Shakespeare Lives' website.
- [ ] Shakespeare's Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* streamed on BBC iPlayer (2016)
- [ ] 1623 Theatre Company's *Lear/Cordelia* (2016)
- [ ] Black Theatre Live's *Hamlet* from Tara Theatre (2016)
- [ ] Cheek by Jowl's *The Winter's Tale* (2017)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

3. Why did you choose to watch these productions online? Please explain what your main motivations were below. e.g. tickets were unavailable for the theatre production, you wanted to watch a particular performer, you were studying the play.

4. How did you find out that these productions were being broadcast online? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Twitter
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] Email newsletter from the theatre company
- [ ] Online publications or articles
- [ ] Other email newsletter
- [ ] Word of mouth in person
- [ ] Someone messaged me directly to let me know
- [ ] Tumblr
- [ ] Reddit
- [ ] Physical publications (magazines/newspapers)
- [ ] Posters
- [ ] Theatre website
- [ ] I searched online for upcoming livestreams
- [ ] Other (please specify)

5. Some of the broadcasts listed above were available through a number of digital platforms. Please tick all of the platforms you used to access the streams that you watched.

- [ ] YouTube
- [ ] Theatre company's own website
- [ ] BBC's The Space
- [ ] Facebook Live
- [ ] Periscope
- [ ] Twitter
- [ ] Through The Telegraph website
- [ ] Through The Guardian website
- [ ] Globe Player
- [ ] Through an unofficial link
- [ ] I was unaware of the platform being used
- [ ] Other platforms or sources (please specify)

6. Which devices did you use to watch these productions?

- [ ] A desktop computer
- [ ] A laptop
- [ ] A tablet
- [ ] A mobile phone
- [ ] On or through a television screen
- [ ] Other, please give details

7. Thinking only about the productions that you accessed online, did you also access them via any of the following methods? Select all that apply.

- [ ] In the theatre
- [ ] On television broadcast
- [ ] On DVD
- [ ] Digital download
- [ ] Cinema
- [ ] In a school
- [ ] In an archive
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other

Please provide details about which productions you also watched differently in the box below

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

These questions are about what you did before watching these productions.

8. How many of the online productions did you watch alone?

- ◯ All of them
- ◯ Some of them
- ◯ None of them

9. When you watched with other people, who was this with? Select all that apply (if this isn't relevant, please skip to the next question)

- ☐ The people I live with
- ☐ A small number of friends
- ☐ As part of a larger organised screening
- ☐ Other (please specify)

10. Did you do any of the following things **before** watching any of the productions online? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Spoke to others in person about watching the production
- [ ] Tweeted about your plans to watch
- [ ] Posted or commented on Facebook about your plans to watch
- [ ] Messaged others privately about watching
- [ ] Engaged in discussion on Reddit about watching
- [ ] Posted something related to watching on Tumblr
- [ ] Looked up/followed theatre company social media feeds
- [ ] Reached out to the theatre company on social media e.g. by tagging them in a tweet
- [ ] Read reviews of the production
- [ ] Watched online trailers or interviews with cast/creatives
- [ ] Used Snapchat to let others know you would be watching
- [ ] Browsed social media to see what others were saying e.g. searched an official hashtag on Twitter
- [ ] Downloaded a digital programme
- [ ] Read the play or familiarised yourself with the plot
- [ ] Organised a screening with other people
- [ ] Prepared food or drink
- [ ] Prepared the physical space in which you were watching in some way

If you did something else or would like to elaborate on anything please do so here:

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

This questions are about what you did during and after watching the productions.

11. Did you do any of the following things **whilst you were watching** any of the productions online? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Spoke to the people watching with me
- [ ] Engaged in a public online conversation about the production on any platform
- [ ] Tweeted about the production
- [ ] Messaged others privately about the production
- [ ] Engaged with the theatre company on social media
- [ ] Engaged in online conversation or activity not related to the production
- [ ] Browsed social media to see what other audience members were saying e.g. searched an official hashtag on Twitter
- [ ] Moving around
- [ ] Cooking
- [ ] Eating or drinking
- [ ] Turned your smartphone off

If you did something else or would like to elaborate on anything please do so here:

12. Did you do any of the following **after** watching any of the productions? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Talked in person about the production
- [ ] Shared a link to the online stream on social media
- [ ] Followed the theatre company on social media or joined their mailing list
- [ ] Tweeted about the production
- [ ] Written blogs about the production
- [ ] Read blogs about the production
- [ ] Shared images of the production on social media
- [ ] Engaged in online conversations about the production
- [ ] Privately messaged about the production

If you did something else or would like to elaborate, please do so here:

13. Of the productions you watched online, how many did you watch live as they were broadcast?

- ◯ All of them
- ◯ Some of them
- ◯ None of them

Please describe some of the factors that influenced your decisions to watch live or recorded

14. Many of the broadcasts, even during live transmission, had the option to pause and play, and to rewind and fast-forward. How did you choose to watch? Select all that apply

- [ ] Watched the whole production all the way through without altering anything, including intervals
- [ ] Watched the whole production stopping and starting but not rewinding or fast-forwarding anything
- [ ] Watched the whole production stopping and starting, and rewinding or fast-forwarding
- [ ] Watched only part of the production

Please use the space below to explain your approach:

15. Did watching the productions live or recorded influence the things that you did before, during, and after the productions? Please provide some details below.

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

These questions are about your experiences of the productions.

16. Thinking generally about the productions you saw online, please select how strongly you feel towards the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I learned something about Shakespeare by watching these productions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I felt like I was a part of the productions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I felt connected to other audience members	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Watching the productions online was exciting	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Watching the productions online was an important experience for me	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I felt like I could make myself heard as an audience member	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

If you would like to comment on specific productions in relation to your choices, please do so here:

17. Did you feel that watching these productions online were valuable experiences?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Unsure

Please briefly explain why you feel this way:

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

These questions are about you and your other experiences with Shakespeare

18. Please select up to THREE of the statements below that are most relevant to you.

- [ ] I'm a Shakespeare lover
- [ ] I'm a theatre enthusiast
- [ ] I find the theatre intimidating
- [ ] I'm a culture vulture
- [ ] I find the internet intimidating
- [ ] I would like to participate more in the arts
- [ ] I hope to learn more by watching online theatre
- [ ] I find Shakespeare intimidating
- [ ] Accessing theatre online feels natural to me
- [ ] I watch online theatre to see particular actors on stage
- [ ] I have an academic interest in theatre or Shakespeare

If none of the above statements resonate with you please feel free to come up with your own below:

19. How else have you accessed Shakespeare in performance?

- [ ] At a cinema screening
- [ ] On a television broadcast
- [ ] Broadcast to a school
- [ ] On a DVD or VHS
- [ ] At a library or archive
- [ ] As part of an audience at a theatre or performance venue
- [ ] Downloaded recorded theatre online (e.g. accessing Globe Player or Digital Theatre Productions)
- [ ] On YouTube
- [ ] Downloaded or streamed unofficial copies of productions (e.g. via a torrent)
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other (please specify)

20. Approximately how many times in the past 12 months have you attended a live performance at a theatre or other venue?

- ( ) None
- ( ) 1-3 times
- ( ) 4-6 times
- ( ) 7-9 times
- ( ) 10-15 times
- ( ) More than 15 times

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

Finally, these questions are about you.

21. In what type of community do you live?

- ◯ City or urban community
- ◯ Suburban community
- ◯ Rural community
- ◯ Other (please specify)

22. Do you live in the UK?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

If you would like to, please specify the name of the country in which you live

23. What is your age?

- ◯ 18 to 24
- ◯ 25 to 34
- ◯ 35 to 44
- ◯ 45 to 54
- ◯ 55 to 64
- ◯ 65 to 74
- ◯ 75 or older

24. With which gender identity do you most identify?

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Transgender Female
- ◯ Transgender Male
- ◯ Gender variant/non-conforming
- ◯ Prefer not to say

Not listed

25. Please describe your race/ethnicity.

Online theatre broadcasts of Shakespeare - Audience survey

26. Please use this space to provide any other comments regarding your experiences with online broadcasts of Shakespeare.

Appendix 3: Online Interview Invitation

Dear [participant],

You may remember that late last year you completed an online survey about watching Shakespeare online. I am contacting you now as you indicated that you would be willing to be contacted with opportunities to participate in further research, and I would like to invite you now to take part in an online interview.

In the interview, I will ask you more about your encounters with Shakespeare online, as well as your other experiences with Shakespeare and the theatre. I am especially interested in your motivations to watch Shakespeare online and what you have particularly enjoyed about your experiences.

If you choose to participate, the interview will take place online, on a platform of your choice (over e-mail, Facebook messenger, Twitter direct message, or another platform), at a time that is convenient to you. As the interview is online, it means that it does not have to take place all in one go (although it can do if you'd prefer) but in total, the interview should last between 30 mins to 1 hour. This will be a bit of an experimental interviewing technique but I'm hoping that it will allow me to interview audiences who I wouldn't be able to reach in person!

If you would be interested in taking part, please reply to this email. I will then provide you with further details and we can arrange the most convenient way of conducting the interview.

Of course, there is no obligation to participate and if you choose not to, thank you once again for completing the survey and contributing to my research.

Otherwise, I very much look forward to hearing from you!

Kind Regards,

Rachael Nicholas

Appendix 4: Online Interview Prompt Questions

1. Which Shakespeare broadcasts have you watched online? As well as broadcasts, what other ways have you accessed Shakespeare productions on screen (e.g. through Digital Theatre, YouTube, cinema etc.)?
2. Could you describe your experiences with Shakespeare more broadly? For example, did you study Shakespeare at school, do you see Shakespeare productions regularly at the theatre?
3. Shakespeare means many different things to different people - both good and bad! If you had to describe Shakespeare in three words, what would they be and why?
4. Why is it important to you to watch Shakespeare in performance (rather than say, reading the plays)?
5. What does it mean to you to 'be' an audience?
6. Are there any ways in which you think being an audience of Shakespeare differs from being an audience of anything else?
7. Does your approach to being an audience change when you watch Shakespeare online? In what ways?
8. What has been your perception of the audience for online Shakespeare in general? Do you think this audience is different from audiences in the theatre or in cinemas?
9. What have been some of the reasons that you have chosen to watch Shakespeare online?
10. What do you particularly enjoy, appreciate, or value about watching Shakespeare online? Have particular productions worked better than others?
11. What are the downsides of watching Shakespeare online?
12. In the survey, it was particularly interesting to see how audiences of online broadcasts communicated with each other. How important is it to you to feel connected with others when you are watching theatre online?
13. Do you tend to communicate with others before, during, or after watching productions online? Who do you communicate with and how? What do you talk about?
14. Social media often enables you to contact the theatre companies or actors – do you ever do this? Does it change how you feel towards the production?
15. Do you think watching Shakespeare online is an experience equal in cultural prestige to attending the theatre? Why do you think this?
16. Are there any changes you would like to see in online theatre streaming, either as part of the experience or in terms of the content available?
17. Do you have any other comments or experiences that you wanted to share related to watching Shakespeare online?

Appendix 5: Online broadcasts of Shakespeare productions 2012-2018

Release Date	Play	Theatre Space	Theatre Company	Broadcast Company	Mode of distribution
23 April – 9 June 2012	Globe to Globe Festival (Complete Works)	Globe Theatre	Shakespeare's Globe	Globe on Screen/The Space	32 of the productions were streamed live online on The Space website. Live transmissions.
13 Aug 2012	2008: Macbeth	Lowland Hall, Edinburgh	TR Warszawa	Edinburgh International Festival and Adam Mickiewicz Institute	Online: Guardian website. Live transmission.
24 Aug 2013	Henry VI: Harry the Sixth, The Houses of York and Lancaster, The True Tragedy of the Duke of York (three-part trilogy)	Monken Hadley Common, Barnet	Shakespeare's Globe	Globe on Screen	Online: The Space. Live transmission.
13 Nov 2013	Richard II	RST	RSC	RSCLive	Cinema. Live transmission. Online: BBC Shakespeare Lives website (23 April 2016)
22 April 2015	Measure for Measure	Silk Street Theatre, Barbican	Cheek by Jowl	Roundhouse Digital Productions	Online: embedded YouTube link on various sites. Live transmission.
25 June – 4 July 2015[53]	Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare	Berliner Festspiele, Berlin	Forced Entertainment	Forced Entertainment	Online: embedded YouTube link on various sites. Live transmission.

[53] This production was live streamed online again from Theaterfestival Basel, Switzerland, 1st Sep – 9th Sep 2016.

12 Nov 2015	King Lear	The Maria, Young Vic	Belarus Free Theatre	CultureHub	Online: Belarus Free Theatre website. Live transmission.
25 April 2016	Macbeth	Tara Theatre, London (Tara Arts)	Black Theatre Live in association with Tara Arts and Queen's Hall Arts	Pilot Theatre	Online: Black Theatre Live website.
11 July 2016	King Lear	Royal Exchange Manchester	Talawa Theatre Company	Lion Eyes TV/Saffron Cherry TV	Online: BBC iPlayer (UK), BBC Shakespeare Lives website (International). BBC 4 broadcast 25th Dec 2016. Recorded over two performances.
11 Sept 2016	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Globe Theatre	Shakespeare's Globe	BBC Arts	Online: BBC iPlayer (UK), BBC Shakespeare Lives website (International). Live transmission.
14 Oct 2016	Lear/Cordelia (two-play adaptation of King Lear)	Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester	1623 Theatre Company	Pilot Theatre	Online: YouTube and 1623 website. Live transmission.
27 Oct 2016	Hamlet	Tara Theatre, London (Tara Arts)	Black Theatre Live in association with Watford Palace Theatre and Stratford Circus Arts Centre	Pilot Theatre	Online: Black Theatre Live website. Live transmission.
19 April 2017	The Winter's Tale	Silk Street Theatre, Barbican	Cheek by Jowl	Riverside Studios	Online: embedded YouTube link on various sites. Live transmission.

19 April 2018	Pericles (Périclès Prince de Tyr	Silk Street Theatre, Barbican	Cheek by Jowl	Riverside Studios	Online: embedded YouTube link on various sites. Facebook Live. Live transmission.